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PC CD-ROM

ISSUE #96 DEC 2000

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WIN A TRIP FOR 2 TO SAN FRANSISCO!
SEE PAGE 50 FOR DETAILS



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THE COMPO NO ONE FINDS Correctly answer this month's cover question and you could win some PC goodies. Send your entry on a postcard addressed to: **The Compo No One Finds (96), *PC ZONE*, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1P 5FF.** The first entry with the correct answer plucked out of the hat wins a mystery prize. The editor's decision is final. Closing date: Wednesday November 15 2000. The winner of our October (#94) cover compo was Mr Alistair Burnett of Co. Londonderry, who wins something from the *ZONE* prizes cupboard for sending in the correct answer to our last little teaser.

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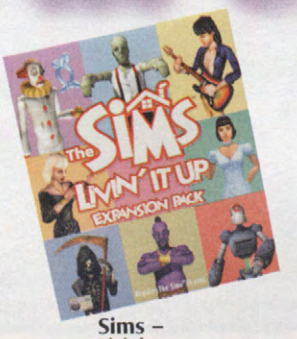


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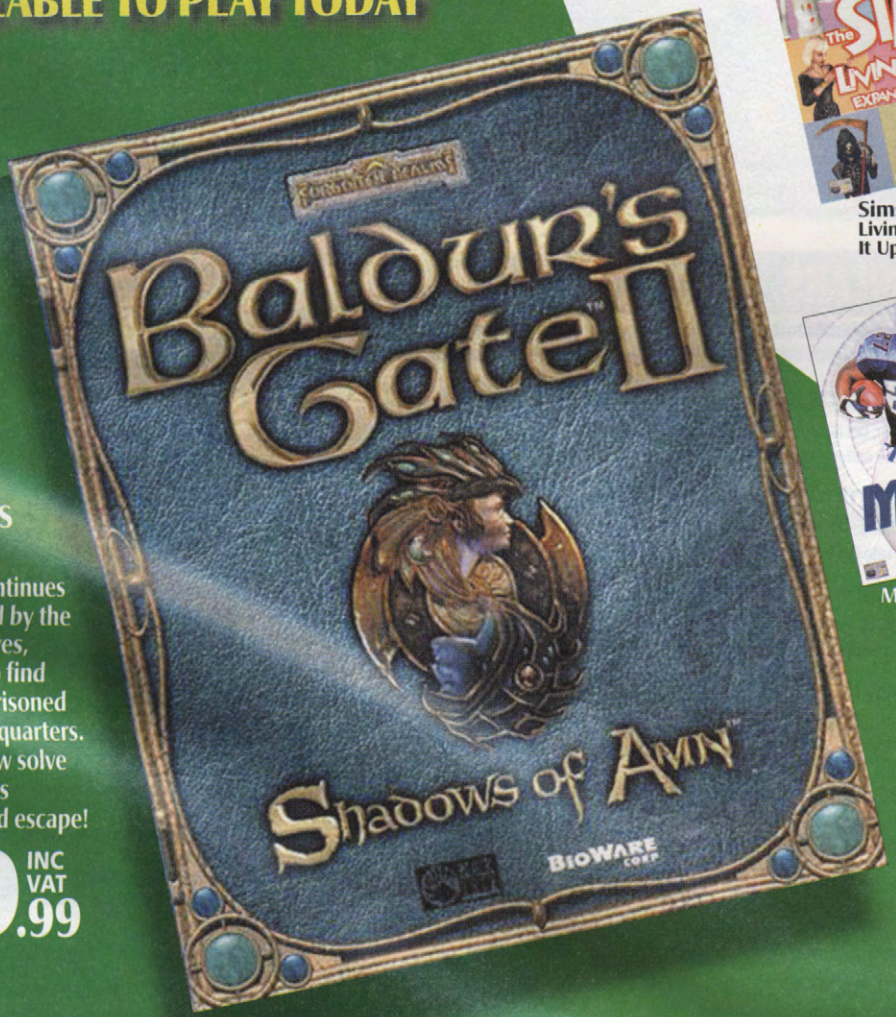
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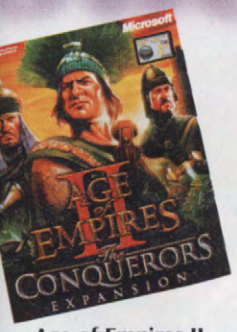


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BUSMAN'S HOLIDAY



When you start work on a games' magazine, there's only one thing that keeps you going. One thing that keeps the grey stuff inside your head from stretching and snapping into insanity's evil clutch – and it's not the promise of the next Warren Spector game. It's what's known as a sabbatical. A three-month long break that you're allowed to have if you manage to clock up the seemingly impossible total of five years' service. Your esteemed editor, Chris Anderson has just scaled these dizzy heights and, as such, he's dumped me at the helm – in a temporary capacity, of course – until the end of the year.

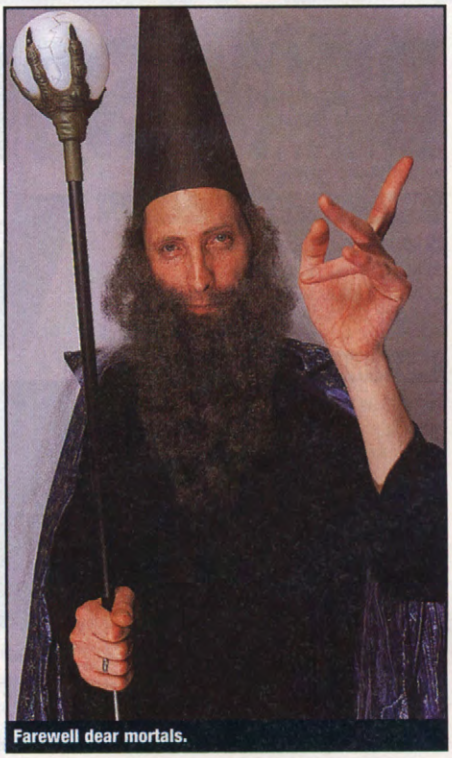
For most people, the sabbatical represents one final opportunity to go off and travel the world. Most people book a round-the-world trip, taking in the steamy delights of Bangkok before arriving in Australia and realising life is so much more pleasant in the sunshine. Not Chris. Why settle for the Far East when there are far more exotic climes to settle in? Chris will be hunkering down for a three-month sojourn to the mystical land of Kunark, or Norrath, or some other far-flung place with no vowels and a meaningless apostrophe in the middle. In fact, we expect Chris to spend his entire holiday on the *EverQuest* server, praying to God that his ADSL line doesn't get cut off before Christmas.

"We expect Chris to spend his entire three-month holiday on the *EverQuest* server, praying that his ADSL line isn't cut off"

Me? Well, I'll be cracking the whip over the regular team, and making them pay for treating me like dirt, while simultaneously sucking up to Chris.

This is also the first issue of the magazine to carry a fabled DVD on the front. We're not going to be running a DVD every issue because there's simply not enough original material to make it worth your while. However, rest assured, that the DVD will be making a second outing before too long.

In the meantime, why not write in and let me know what you think of the magazine? I aim to make sure it's still the best read on the shelves when Chris finally returns from the other side.



Farewell dear mortals.

Dave Woods
Acting Editor

TOP STORY



Isn't he a bit too old to be playing with toy soldiers?

DRAW SOME ROYAL BLOOD IN...

WARRIOR KINGS

Want a 3D RTS with real depth? This could be more valuable than the crown jewels

★ **ON THE BATTLEFIELD** Mark Hill

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

DEVELOPER Black Cactus Games
PUBLISHER Havas Interactive
EXPECTED RELEASE DATE 2001
WEBSITE www.blackcactus.com

IN SUMMARY

A 3D RTS set in a medieval world with dark fantasy elements and a strong economic base. The 3D battles will be a step below *Shogun*, but there is also a big *Age Of Empires* and *Red Alert* influence. There will be multiplayer support for up to eight players.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

The story has been written by Jamie Thomson, which instantly guarantees a believable fantasy world with great characters and an involving plot. Plus, the game combines elements from the best real-time strategies ever made.


Look at that, perfectly in line.


Ahh, there's nothing quite as satisfying as a bit of cannon haze.


Big armies ensure some spectacular battles.




Create a Wicker Man to become an evil power.


Everything you need to know will be immediately apparent.


Familiar setting, complex mechanics.

The first game from British developer Black Cactus, *Warrior Kings,* is a promising 3D real-time strategy that could make some big headlines in the coming months. Fundamentally an economic game with a large military aspect, it might help you to know that when we spoke to Steven Bristow, project manager and designer on *Warrior Kings*, the games *Age Of Empires*, *Red Alert* and *Shogun* cropped up quite often.

According to Steven, it is set in a fantasy medieval world because: "The game mechanics are quite complex, so we wanted to make the fundamental theme quite simple. Everyone knows what cavalry and archers do, and we wanted the learning experience to be about what you can do with the units, rather than what the units actually are." So while it may not be a radical departure from everything that's gone before it, this well-trodden setting allowed the team to concentrate on the internal workings.

You start the game building up a city, watching your tiny men wander around chopping wood and establishing a community around your castle. As time goes by satellite villages spring up and trade routes are created feeding your economy and helping you to expand. Of course, it's not long before you're drawn to acts of violence, as nearby cities attack you. As well as other medieval soldiers, you have to face demonic monsters that tower over your soldiers and have great big gaping mouths instead of bellybuttons. Which brings us to another important aspect of the game: divine power, which can be called upon to perform acts of God. You are given the choice to go down the holy route (by building cathedrals, being good and all that rubbish) or the demonic one (having fun, building wicker men and killing virgins). This affects the acts of God you get to use and the type of monsters you can conjure up. The path you take affects the way your city looks, creating a dark ambience and a deep red sky hanging above. "A lot of the emphasis is on the immediate visual feedback of what's going on in the game," says Steven. "We're trying to get away from this idea that you have to select something to find out what it is and what it's doing."

"Positional advantage and the type of units you pitch against each other will be of the greatest importance"

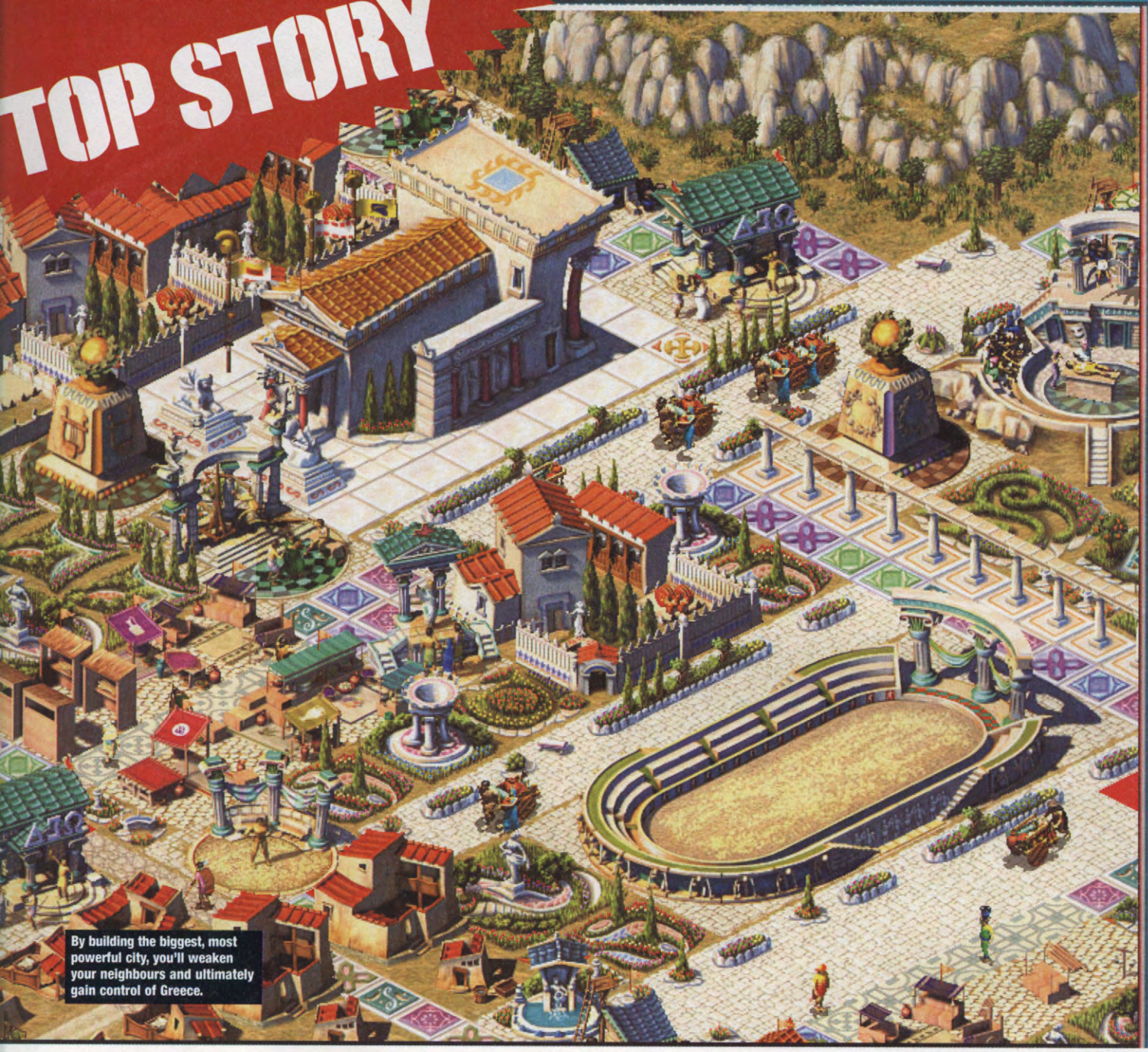
Military units are supported by farms, which means a big drain on food production and, consequently, on your whole economy. Similar to the power supplies in *Red Alert*, it's one of the ways Black Cactus has tried to stop the typical 'rushing' problem encountered in so many RTSs, which tend to make them too simplistic. You can't just create a massive army and send them out to kill all its enemies. You have to plan carefully and allocate resources where they're most needed. The developers main emphasis though, is on making the battles more strategically dependant than they usually are.

"One of the things that bothered us about *Age Of Empires* was the way that if you have 20 soldiers and I have 17 I'm going to lose, and there's not much I can do about that," says Steven.

In *Warrior Kings*, positional advantage and the type of units you pitch against each other will be of the greatest importance and will attempt to go further than *Shogun* did.

What will separate it from other RTSs is its emphasis on an involving story, written by Jamie Thomson (the genius behind *The Way Of The Tiger* RPG books, which he co-wrote with Mark Smith). If you're interested in something more than a string of skirmishes, we're sure Jamie's plot will make this one to look out for. PZ

TOP STORY



By building the biggest, most powerful city, you'll weaken your neighbours and ultimately gain control of Greece.

GET THE GODS ON YOUR SIDE WITH...

ZEUS: MASTER OF OLYMPUS

Build cities and temples, summon gods and heroes and conquer ancient Greece

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNER Andrew Wright

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

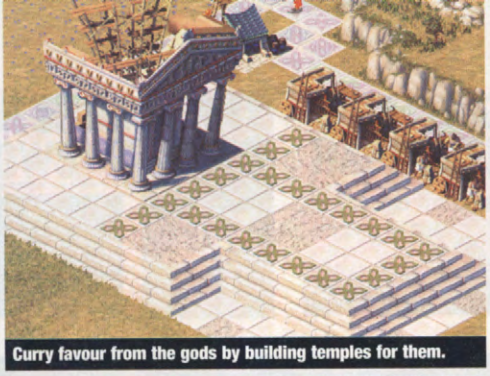
DEVELOPER Impressions
PUBLISHER Sierra
EXPECTED RELEASE DATE December 2000
WEBSITE zeus.impressionsgames.com

IN SUMMARY

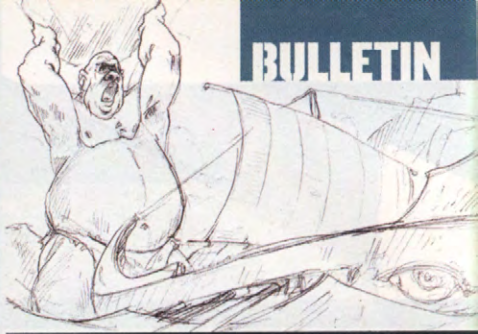
Build up a beautiful Ancient Greek civilisation with huge cities, mines, monuments and even far-flung colonies. Build temples to attract gods and persuade them to help you combat natural disasters or your enemies. Wage war on other city states and ally with others to win the game and dominate Greece...

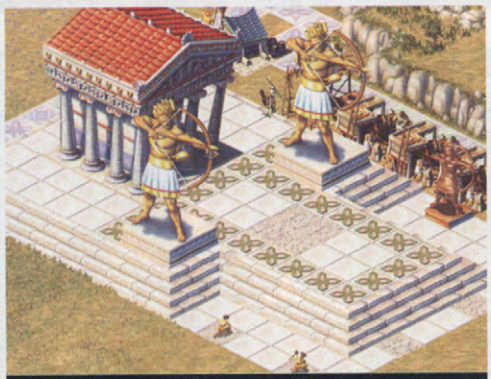
WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

While Zeus is based on the highly successful building sims *Caesar III* and *Pharaoh*, it will be much easier for beginners to play and include shorter, more digestible scenarios. The gods will have more character and be less likely to throw in random disasters and events, and the graphics, animation and interface have all been revamped.


Curry favour from the gods by building temples for them.

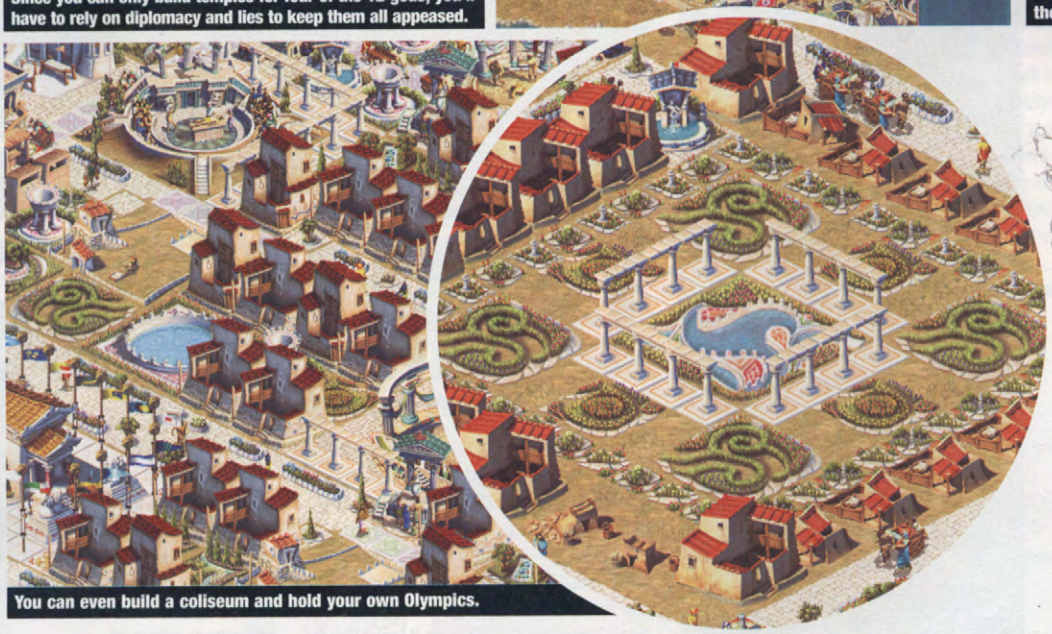

The gods will appear on the streets in human form.


Get on the wrong side of the gods and you're dead meat.


Since you can only build temples for four of the 12 gods, you'll have to rely on diplomacy and lies to keep them all appeased.


Creating a city from scratch is a monumental task, but you might be able to persuade the gods to help you, or not.


Once you've built a hall of heroes, you'll be able to summon them to defend your city.


You can even build a coliseum and hold your own Olympics.



Although it sounds like one, *Zeus: Master Of Olympus* isn't strictly a god game in that you don't actually play as a god. However, as in most building games, you do control your workers and soldiers, decide where to build and so on. Naturally, the object of the game is to build up the biggest, most powerful city state, knocking out or weakening your neighbours until you control all of ancient Greece.

Unlike previous games in the series, though, you don't have to do it all on your own. You can enlist the help of the gods, 12 of them in all, ranging from Zeus, the most powerful of all, down to Aphrodite, Poseidon and Apollo. These gods will appear in your city in human form and, while they can be right royal pains, battling with each other in the streets and flattening buildings in the process, you can curry favour with them by building temples dedicated to their worship.

You'll be rewarded in different ways by different gods. Ares, for instance, will fight alongside your army if he likes you and, if not, he'll send a huge dragon to make unpleasant things happen to your city and its citizens. Hades will help boost your silver production, but will also send a Cerberus if you get on the wrong side of him. And a Cerberus is bad news...


Upset Hades and you won't live to regret it.

The trouble is you can only build temples for four of the 12 gods in your city, so you need to play diplomatically. The other gods will send creatures such as Scylla, a minotaur or a medusa, but there's another way to fight back. Once you've built a hall of heroes, you'll be able to summon them to defend your city. Each of the six heroes can defeat two of the nasties, but they'll only put in an appearance provided you've completed certain tasks.

"While the gods can be a pain, fighting in the streets and flattening buildings, you can curry favours from them"

Impressions is aiming for more simplified gameplay in *Zeus* than in its earlier release *Pharaoh*. For example, while you'll have to build roads first and then add houses, you'll no longer have to have an unobstructed road from house to building to ensure the building is staffed correctly. As long as you have enough houses and workers in your city, the building will function.

Several short scenarios will be included, each under an hour long yet still contributing to the end result. You'll be able to build huge Greek monuments one piece at a time and there will be a simpler but more varied range of building types. There'll even be a stadium, where you can train athletes and hold your own Olympic games.

Although building and resource management will still play an important part in *Zeus*, Impressions wants players to focus as much on events in the world around them as they do on the city, something that should add plenty of imagination and depth to an already popular genre. There's even a chance it will appear before Christmas... PZ

NEWS

INSPIRATION EXPIRATION

NEWS EDITOR Mark Hill



It is said that variety is the spice of life. If that is the case, then the current gaming panorama must be a bland-tasting plate full of over-boiled potatoes.

As you'll be able to see for yourself, almost every game currently in the works is either an RPG or a real-time strategy. Like in every other market, companies have a look at what sells and try to produce more of the same. So, if *Age Of Empires II* and *Diablo II* both cleaned up in the charts, it can only mean that there is a wave of similar titles on the way.

What is most depressing and worrying about this is that the two titles I've just mentioned, and most of the other games that are currently making their way through the sales table, are sequels. This is not a new complaint. The industry has been riddled with the problems of a lack of imagination and original titles for the last ten years.

There is no such thing as a classic game that stands on its own anymore. People – ourselves included – are clamouring for *Half-Life 2*, *Deus Ex 2* is in development, there are plans in the pipeline for a *Black & White* sequel and *Baldur's Gate II* is already in the shops.

Film critics are always bemoaning the number of sequels and movie remakes that hit the big screen every summer, but at least they don't have to put up with the likes of *Pulp Fiction 2*, and there are no plans to make a sequel to *Citizen Kane* just yet.

Developers aren't really the ones to blame in all this, because, basically, if they don't work with the trends of the time, then they won't find a publisher. It's only when we stop finding games such as *Deus Ex* or *Shogun: Total War* that we should start to get really worried. That could be the day when *Diablo IX* and *Red Alert 6* rear their ugly heads.

TECHHEAD

The latest and greatest hardware news



P.27

THE PCZONE CHARTS

What's in, out, up and down



ChartTrack

P26



A different perspective on the *X-COM* series.

X-COM ENFORCER

The latest *X-COM* game goes arcade

The *X-COM* series has built a reputation for deep and thoughtful gameplay, from the original turn-based *UFO: Enemy Unknown* to the forthcoming (and perpetually delayed) *X-COM: Alliance*. With *Enforcer*, MicroProse is breaking the mould and creating a third-person no-brainer blastathon. The closest thing it looks like is *Slave Zero*, with which it shares the straight-forward arcade approach. The story, usually an incidental aside to such affairs, is set in the much loved *X-COM* universe and involves a sophisticated android and shooting small grey aliens. No news yet as to when Hasbro is planning to release it.

LONG, COLD WINTER

Not wanting to be outdone by the *Diablo* camp, Black Isle is working on an expansion-pack for *Icewind Dale* called *Heart Of Winter*. As is the norm with these deals, there are a host of new monsters, spells and magic items on the way. There are also a few features that should probably have come with the original, such as higher resolutions and a drop-away interface. It's questionable whether anyone will still be interested in the *Icewind Dale* world now that *Baldur's Gate II* is out and about, but die-hard fans and Black Isle completists will probably lap it up. The story, for what it's worth, revolves around a wave of barbarians wreaking havoc across the region while a mysterious traveller joins your party in an effort to stop it. As yet there is no release date set, but the add-on has already been in development a while, so you shouldn't have to wait too long to see it in the shops.



She's so cold she'd stick to your fingers.

MAN WHO KNOWS
The latest industry gossip
P.30



WHATEVER HAPPENED TO...
Is *Starship Troopers* coming or not?
P.31



HOTSHOTS
Giant pictures of Alice to tickle your eye-buds
P.32



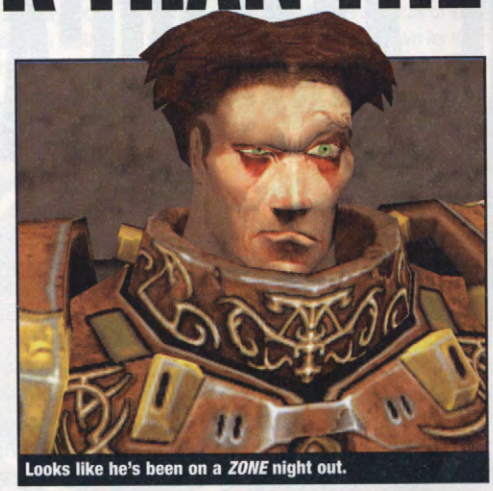
EVEN BETTER THAN THE REAL THING

New Unreal engine revealed.

It's no secret that the original *Unreal* was a dull game with a wonderful engine that is still being used by some of the best recent releases (*Deus Ex* for example). So, when Epic decide it's time for a complete engine upgrade, the whole industry stands up and takes notice. While the first game to use the new engine will be *Unreal 2*, the sequel is not being developed by Epic but by Legend, the creators of last year's underrated *Wheel Of Time*. With all the hush-hush surrounding the game, there's very little information on what *Unreal 2* will be like, but we can at least tell you a bit more about the technology it will use.

There is a new skeletal animation system that allows for some superbly detailed characters, who move and look far better than before. As you can see from the screenshots, there is a great scope for facial expressions, since the face is also modelled in great detail. The new speech technology should mean that watching an in-game character talk will be very close to the real thing. For those of you turned-on by technical details, the characters are made up of more than 3,700 polygons, which decrease as you move away from the model in question. This means that the frame rate can fly by in the thick of the action and that you can also get an amazing amount of detail when it all slows down and you walk up close to objects.

Another exciting feature is how well it deals with wide outdoor areas (a notorious downfall of all *Quake* engines). We can imagine a very impressive *Hidden & Dangerous* level taking place on those wide open snowy plains, and it certainly opens up the kind of environments we can expect to see in *Unreal 2*. This should please everyone with a passing interest in 3D games. There's no doubt we'll be seeing a host of titles using the engine in the near future.



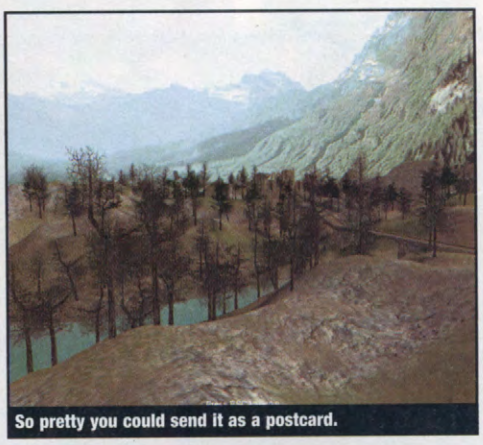
Looks like he's been on a *ZONE* night out.



We like wide open spaces. They make us feel good.



'Get them off me, get them off me!'



So pretty you could send it as a postcard.

CASH-IN PARK

Despite being a rather mediocre follow-up to an all-time classic, *Theme Park World* sold bucketloads. It's no surprise then that Electronic Arts is preparing to release the most capitalistically titled game in the series, *Theme Park Inc.* To be fair, Bullfrog's latest rollercoastering attempt does add some much needed depth to the series. Instead of just handing you some cash and some virtual competition, *Theme Park Inc.* involves you in a proper story, with you as an assistant manager trying to make your way to the top of the company. But where it really seems to have the edge over its predecessor is in the rollercoasters you can build. While before the rides were slow, boring and simple (making the game look like a poor joke next to *Rollercoaster Tycoon*), this time you can actually create massive rollercoasters and get to appreciate them from bird's eye views. The childish, consoley graphics are still there though, and the fact that you only get three more themes (Arabian, Polar and New Science) gives it all an expansion-pack look. We're certain you'll still spend most of your time putting too much sugar in the ice cream, too much salt in the fries and too much ice in the drinks, fooling hundreds of customers to buy addictive but unsubstantial products they've already bought before, but we'll wait for its probable Christmas release to see if it can recapture the original game's charm.



Can *Theme Park Inc* maintain your interest for longer than 24 hours?



This view makes you feel like you might be playing a PC game after all.



Better rollercoasters – but still not as intricate as the ones in *Tycoon*.



Someone could seriously get impaled on that carrot.

SHORTS

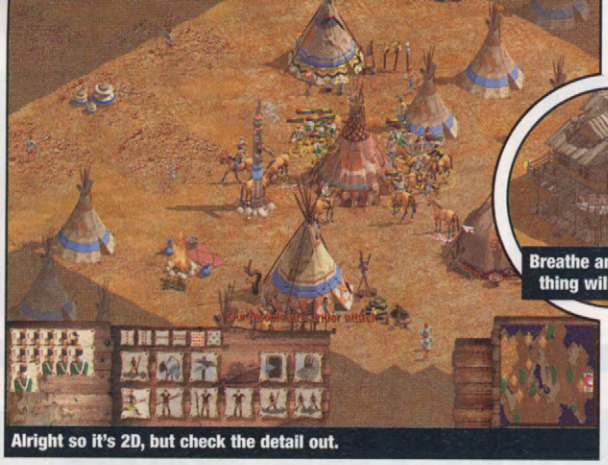
EPILOGUE



Developed by Team Sigma, *Epilogue* is another 3D real-time strategy, featuring tanks, trucks and men with machine guns. There'll be 32 missions and you'll end up changing sides – from fighting terrorists to fighting the government. Should be out next summer.

REBORN

Developed by Nerve Lab, *Reborn* is a first-person sci-fi action/adventure featuring a really dark atmosphere. The game is undergoing a change of engine and Nerve Lab is still looking for a publisher, so it's likely we won't be seeing it until next year.



Alright so it's 2D, but check the detail out.



Breathe and the whole thing will fall down.

Now that's the sort of thing we like to see.

AGE OF AMERICAN EMPIRES

Get on your horse and drink your milk. OK?

History has been ruthlessly pillaged in the name of real-time strategies but curiously, one area has been left untapped – The Wild West. With a readymade line of combatants – Indians (the concept of being politically correct obviously hasn't reached this enclave of developers), Americans, Mexicans and Desperadoes – Data Becker is set to remedy this with its traditional 2D effort, unimaginatively titled *America*.

From what we can gather, the action is going to be old-skool as well, with the pattern of campaigns following the build, research, build and fight model. Resources read like the inventory for any self-respecting Western, with food, gold, wood and horses acting as the spoils of war. Each of the different 'races' has different strengths and weaknesses, and although the developers are claiming historical accuracy over 90 years of post Civil War America, we reckon that you should take these words with a large pinch of sodium chloride.

Despite appearing out of nowhere, we reckon the game should be finished in a couple of months and despite the fact that it offers nothing new and cocks a snoop at the new array of 3D contenders, we reckon that *America* might be a whole lot of fun.



Massive amounts of soldiers will be slaughtering each other on-screen at any one time.

TIME OF CONFLICT

French RTS from Microids

More news from French shores, this time a real-time strategy from Microids. *Time Of Conflict* is set in ancient Earth, when three civilisations (Guild, Foundation and Alliance) battled each other and presumably got wiped out along with the dinosaurs. You'll be able to make allies and utilise each of the civilisations' characteristics. The Guild are a psychotic cult who use incantations and their own fanaticism to beat their enemies to a pulp, the Foundation is a great industrial power and Alliance counts on its increasing number of barbaric hordes to wipe out the opposition. As you can see, each side has its own advantages and disadvantages. Expect it in time for the great conflict (ie Christmas).

HE'S GOT A GIFT

Platform antics from Cyro

Developed by Eko Software and to be published by Cryo Interactive, *Gift* is an unusual (French) 3D action/adventure. The anti-hero that gives the game its title shoots, jumps from one platform to another and solves a myriad of weird puzzles while attempting to put a smile on your face. Quite a feat if Eko can pull it off. In a clever (or stupid, depending on your point of view) postmodern twist, the story is about a game under development that is looking for a main character. *Gift* is the latest applicant who has to rescue a princess to get the job. Keeping the whole theme tongue-in-cheek, you'll find references to modern culture littered over all the levels, including Lara Croft, *Star Wars* and even *Quake*. It's definitely an original idea, but we're still a bit sceptical. It could turn out to be just another platform game with arty pretensions that falls flat on its unfunny face. We really hope we're wrong.



Looks like a red, evil version of *Messiah*'s cherub.

KINGDOM UNDER FIRE

Like your games weird and Korean?

Since all we seem to be talking about this month is RPGs and RTSs, it seems only fitting that a game should come along claiming to be both. *Kingdom Under Fire* is a hero-based game that sets out to confuse by being too many different things at once. To make matters worse, the developer, Phantagram, is Korean, and any sense to be made from its press releases is purely a fluke. There are two races, humans and devils, who battle it out in old real time strategy style across an Earth strewn with monsters and apocalyptic creatures. The story features names such as Keeliani, the old dragon Nible, Rick Miner (resurrected as Rick Blood), Hextor magicians, Gernot the Prince of Azilla and the great Dragon Knight Keither. As such, it makes no sense whatsoever. From what we can gather, the traditional strategy aspects include managing resources (gold, iron and mana) and building tactical structures. The role-playing element comes into play when experience points are dished out after battle, improving the units' abilities. Because each side has a set of heroes, a lot of the strategy revolves around using them to your advantage. Expect lots of lovely effects for the spells, although these might have to be toned down for the multiplayer side of things. As soon as we can make any more sense out of it, we'll let you know.



***Kingdom Under Fire* could be an oriental take on *TA Kingdoms*.**



Is that Brian Blessed flying through the air?

SHORTS

LOAN A GAME



Loan-gamer is a new company that does exactly what it says on the tin. If you're fed up with seeing all those brats renting the latest console games down at your local Blockbuster, you'll be happy to learn that Loan-gamer also rent out PC titles. Not only that, they're delivered to your door and collected back, free of charge. Check out the website **www.loan-gamer.co.uk** and get to play all those games you always wanted to try.

MORE FREELOADER

Freeloader, the popular free games website, is extending its range to encompass even better games. As well as *GTA* and *Hidden & Dangerous*, which are downloadable in nicely chopped up levels, you can now also get *Jimmy White's 2: Cueball*, the fab *Magic & Mayhem* and the less fabulous *Viva Football*. Check **www.freeloader.com** for more titles.

INCOMING TRANSMISSION



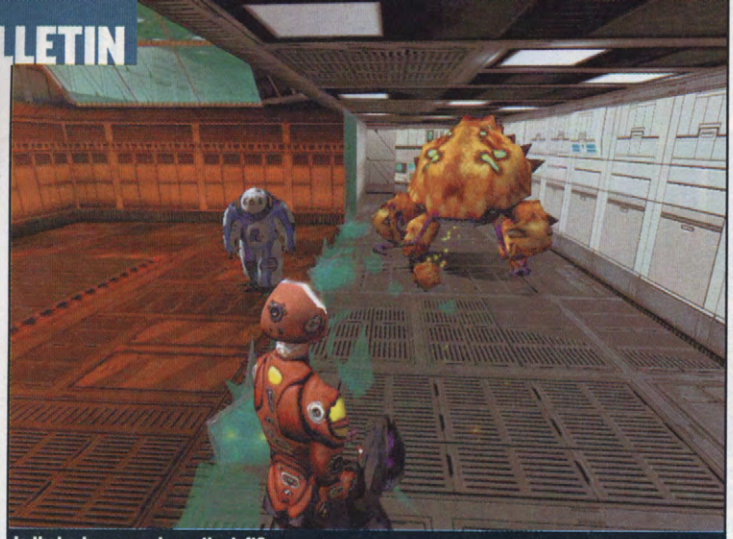
Your rule on this planet - is over

LONG LIVE THE GOLRATHS

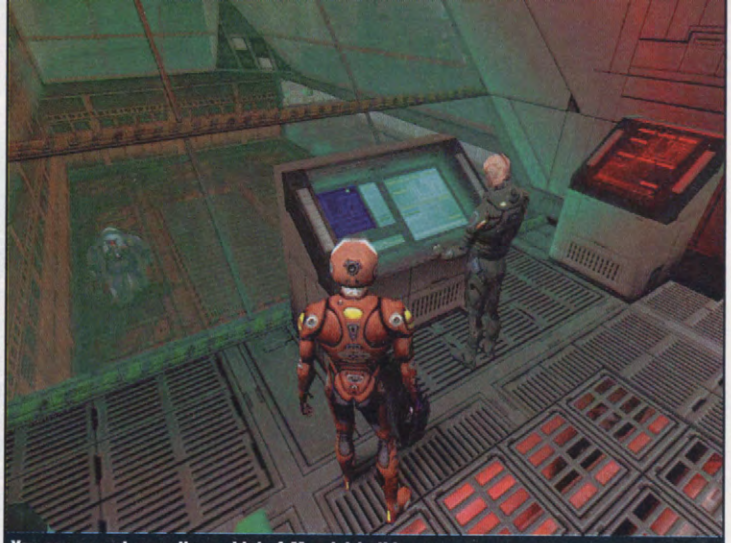
JoWooD Productions

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INFOGRAMES



Is that a huge panda on the left?



You can expect more than a hint of *Messiah* in this game.

EUROPEAN SPACE HORROR

Alien shocks sent from down under

Aussie developer Evolution Games is working on an ambitious third-person action/adventure going by the name of *Europa*. Taking place in the future on Jupiter's moon, *Europa*, the game takes some well-trod *Alien*-esque themes of alien species and greedy corporations. A team of scientists is on the moon investigating a new species when disaster strikes and monsters start gobbling up everyone in sight.

There are three characters to choose from, each one with their own individual storyline, and each of the characters' outcomes are affected by your actions. There is a long background history that will no doubt add some depth to each of the characters' plots, and we're promised plenty of intrigue to keep you occupied through the complex chain of events. You'll encounter many different types of aliens, almost all of them nasty, other humans and various puzzles. From what we've seen so far, Evolution's attempt to create "a level of gameplay previously unseen" will at least be backed up by some fantastic graphics. The game looks closer to *Messiah* than *Resident Evil*, but the atmosphere of the latter is sure to permeate *Europa* and make it one scary game to watch. Currently shopping around for a publisher, *Europa* hasn't got an ETA, but will be arriving on both PC and next-gen consoles.

SHORTS

DEFENDER OF THE CROWN REVISITED

Cinemaware, creators of the legendary Amiga game *Defender Of The Crown*, has announced its move back into game developing. And, unsurprisingly, its first project is a follow-up to its biggest hit and will be known as *Robin Hood: Defender Of The Crown*. It's not the most wildly original of titles, but old nostalgics will probably be weeping with joy at the news.



THE REAL DUNE

In games, *Dune* may mean classic (and not so classic) real-time strategy. But a top-down RTS whose only real relation to the books is the inclusion of spice and giant worms never did get the best use out of the licence. WideScreen Games is looking to change all that with an action/adventure called *Frank Herbert's Dune* which, in the vein of Bram Stroker's *Dracula* and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* films, will try to capture the true mood and story of the original. Watch out for more news on the Cryo published title soon.

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER TRANSFER?

The news of the proposed modifications to the player transfer system by the European Community has sent ripples through the sport and threatens to affect *Championship Manager*. The new system would allow players to walk out of clubs and teams to rip up contracts of unwanted players. Effectively, this could mean the end of one of the *Champ Manager*'s most exciting and indepth areas.

Considering how important transfer dealings are to the overall *Championship Man* experience, we asked Paul Collyer if he was afraid the new transfer system could spell the end of *Championship Manager* as we know it? "No. But it will be a nightmare to program since no one really knows what the long-term effects will be," he replies. "I don't think it will happen now that the governments have got involved..." He adds that Sports Interactive hasn't started working on changes in the game and that they will wait to see what happens.

As to whether or not he thinks the ruling will have an adverse effect on the sport, his answer is short and to the point: "It will be shite. The EC people should take their heads out of their arses." In other *CM* news, fans will be happy to know that SI has a new and improved website at **www.sigames.com**, supported by an online fanzine, with dozens of *CM*-related stories and features. If that isn't enough to make you happy, the UK release date of the game's latest incarnation, *Champ Manager 00/01*, has been brought forward to the October 27.



The new Sports Interactive website is a joy for all *CM* fans.

TORMENTED TEAM

Team Torment, the group of developers at Black Isle who created the supreme *Planescape: Torment*, has started work on a new, as yet untitled, project. It goes without saying that it's an RPG, quite probably in the same style as *Planescape*. The biggest change is the move to 3D, via the LithTech engine, marking a radical departure from all the 2D *Baldur's Gate* engine-powered releases. A fully real-time game, it will also support a comprehensive multiplayer option and an up-to-date version of the RPG system used in the *Fallout* games. The setting will be completely original, but the only thing we really care about is that it keeps the same high gameplay, story and dialogue standards set by *Planescape*. We'll bring you more news as soon as we get it.



The team certainly look tormented after a hard night's work



One of the best RPGs ever created, *Planescape* set a high standard, which will be hard to beat.

FREEDOM FORCE

A superhero strategic RPG from the *System Shock* boys

Irrational Games, the team responsible for the fabulously cool *System Shock 2* (produced in conjunction with Looking Glass) is working on another groundbreaking RPG. Going by the name of *Freedom Force*, the game takes its cue from the Marvel and DC comics of yesteryear and is set in New York during the '60s. The characters are all typical superheroes, with powers such as flying, freeze rays and energy shields and will be hellbent on fighting crime in all its forms, while at the same time getting swept up in an epic and indepth storyline.

The terrain and environment will be completely destructible, much like in the *FPS Red Faction*, so you'll be able to have plenty of fun destroying and wrecking buildings while you battle the bad guys. This also means that there are no indestructible walls and thus no tediously simplistic find-the-key-to-open-the-door type of puzzles.

We are also promised a more strategic approach to fighting, with a combination of real-time and turn-based combat you find in games such as *X-COM: Apocalypse* (a game it has consistently quoted as being a great source of inspiration) and *Planescape: Torment*.

But, of course, *Freedom Force* is still primordially a RPG and you'll be able to build your characters from the ground up. If you think about it, special powers are really just an extension of *System Shock 2*'s psionic and other skills. Irrational is working very hard to provide plenty of mod and fan support and want to generate the same kind of community *Half-Life* has. Obviously being able to create almost any of your favourite superheroes should help tremendously. The developers, by their own admission, are trying to recapture the golden era of comics when unforgettable classics such as *X-Men* and *The Avengers* first appeared, but a publisher has yet to snap it up. Expect it to be super sometime next year. So until then, cool your boots.



Superheroes or anarchists? Whatever you might think of them, the boys keep swingin'.

INCOMING TRANSMISSION

THANDOR

THE INVASION



TAKEN EARLIER TODAY

FIELD REPORT: GOLRATHS INVADE!

It's War! The Golrath war machine continues to pour into our land... We have fortified our remaining defences and have involved the Golraths in small field skirmishes... We need counter-attack plans formed immediately before it's too late... or the Alliance of Avares could be lost forever...

- Powerful, user-friendly 3D Engine
- 64 fully animated 3D military units & buildings
- Multi-level diplomacy
- Multiplayer campaigns with up to 8 players.
- Mission downloads on www.thandor.com

JoWooD Productions

INFOGRAMES

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They're a lovely bunch of lads really.


The magic weapons give you some spectacular fights.


This is what *Diablo* should have looked like.


A hint of *Final Fantasy* hangs over the battles.

ETHERLORDS

Take turns to praise the new lord

There are more than enough reasons to be suspicious of *Etherlords*. To start with, it's from Nival Interactive, the same company that brought us the poor *Rage Of Mages* series. It also takes its cue from trading card games and is therefore a turn-based strategy game. On the other hand, if you care to glance at the screenshots, you'll see it's a gorgeous turn-based game and that, as far as we're concerned, could make all the difference. While the world may lap up RTS after RTS, there is still a tiny contingent at *ZONE* Towers that longs for the good old days of turn-based gaming. After all, what is *Champ Man* if not a turn-based game? *Etherlords* offers a typical fantasy world, populated by the usual fanfare of orcs, trolls and other unsightly creatures. There are four magic races, each one with its own magical realm, spells and fighting styles. The game introduces an element of resource management that will allow you to create your own spells, according to the type of ingredients you use and the research you undertake. The battles, like in all good turn-based games, are reliant on thoughtful tactics rather than reflex reactions.

Etherlord offers you the chance to explore diplomatic relations with neighbouring realms, negotiate trading and experience a proper storyline that should elevate it above the cemetery where most turn-based games go to die a slow painful death. The 3D engine ensures that the visuals can compete with anything else out there and the almost infinite combination of spells, races, heroes (around 64) and summonable monsters (over 160) should give it plenty of longevity. But all this is mere speculation, and we'll have to wait until next year, and for a publisher to snap it up, to see whether it can live up to expectations.

THE SUICIDE BOOTH

Scandinavian developer Unique Development Studios (UDS) has snapped up the licence for Matt Groening's brilliant cartoon series, *Futurama*, with the games to be published through Fox Interactive. It's a strange choice of developer, considering the massive possibilities of the licence, but then *The Simpsons* was never properly exploited as a games' source. UDS has previously brought us such forgettable gems as *Sno-Cross Championship Racing* and *Hot-Wheel Micro Racers*, so all the signs point to a boring kart racing game and some kind of 2D platform adventure. Hopefully, we'll be proved wrong and we'll get an *Elite*-style space delivery boy sim and a FPS where Bender hunts down the whole human race. More news as and when we have it.



Futurama: coming to a PC near you.

DESERT ISLAND CDS



Legendary Steve Jackson took some time out from his busy *Black & White* schedule and told us what five games he'd choose if he were marooned on a desert island with only a PC and unlimited power supply.

AGE OF EMPIRES (Microsoft) What can I say? The finest multiplayer real-time strategy game ever made. This was the first game in which I actually managed to link two machines and get playing without any problems at all. Probably because it was a Microsoft game!



DUNE II (Virgin) The very first RTS game. I will always remember how, when this game first appeared, I got no work done for two weeks. I'm not the sort of person who gets obsessed with playing a game through to the end. Most games I play only until I am satisfied I've learned all the cool bits, then I lose interest. But *Dune II* I played through three times.

CIVILIZATION II (Microprose) The first *Civilization* was beyond me – couldn't make any sense at all of the city screens. But *Civ II*, with upgraded graphics, was a fine job and offers the intellectual depth to keep the brain occupied for months on a desert island. Close runners-up in the turn-based strategy game category were *Warlords* and *Masters Of Magic*, but *Civ* deserves to win. It would also be the one I'd choose if I could only have one since I could guarantee that would keep me occupied until the rescue boat arrived.

NOX (Westwood Studios) I've got to have at least one RPG on my list, haven't I? In this category it's a toss up between all-time favourites such as *Ultima Underworld*, *Diablo* and *Dungeon Master*. But *Nox* is the game I'm playing at the moment and it's really well done. Especially the lighting effects (true line-of-sight vision) and the way you begin to learn that certain weapons are especially good against certain opponents. A huge adventure, too. Why didn't it do better? Perhaps because it had a lousy box.



BLACK & WHITE (Lionhead) How could I not take a copy of *B&W* with me? It's a truly monumental game that has occupied three years of my life. *B&W* may have been a long time coming, but the wait will definitely be worth it.




Slightly reminiscent of the landing in *Aliens*.


Not a standard flight sim.

THE FUTURE OF FLIGHT SIMS

B-17 II might have breathed some much-needed air into the asphyxiated lungs of the flight sim community, but it looks increasingly as if the genre needs to move on and explore new ground. Going by the working title of *Yager*, Yager Development's debut game looks like doing just that. Set sometime in the future and featuring some incredible eye-candy, you'll be able to fly impressive aircraft over an industrial wasteland peopled by aggressive robots – for some obscure reason, the story will undoubtedly explain. The single-player game will have all sorts of missions to complete, including escorting supply vessels and out-and-out mayhem, while there are also plenty of multiplayer options. At the moment *Yager* is only being released in Germany, but we're hoping someone will snap it up over here.


Hey, and there's people in it, too.


Looks sort of like a futuristic *Crimson Skies*.


Is this a flight sim or what?


This is getting ludicrous...

RACE TWO

Take Two Interactive is getting into the rat race and will be releasing a couple of speedy titles in the coming months. *Motocross Mania* will attempt to throw off Microsoft's *Motocross Madness* series as the two-wheeling stunt game to own. Developed by the same team that created the rather lame *Edgar Torrontera's Extreme Biker*, we're hoping they have learnt a couple of lessons from the experience. There are four distinctive racing styles on offer, from stadium-based motocross circuits to wild outdoor tracks and a comprehensive stunt mode. In the meantime, Ratbag Games is working on a pack, including *Dirt Track Racing* and *DTR: Sprint Cars*, based on the popular, if dirty, American motorsport. Expect fully realistic physics and insane speeds without needing to change your mud-soaked clothes. Both titles should be out in late October.


Where does the driver sit?



LEGENDARY FIGHTS

A third-person action/adventure utilising the *Unreal Tournament* engine. Coo

New Legends, developed by Infinite Machines, could be one of the games to look out for next year. One of Infinite Machines' designers, Justin Chin, was one of the names behind Jedi Knight, which is reason enough to stand up and take notice. The game takes place sometime in the future in China, where you must fight against oppression and injustice, (so nothing has changed there then). The first thing that springs to mind looking at the screenshots is Rebel Act's *Severance: Blade of Darkness*, with emphasis firmly on hack 'n' slash with an oriental twist. The main character, Sun Soo, is an expert at close-range combat and also sports some rather shiny armour. There's more than just melee weapons, however. One of *New Legend's* main features is the ability to hold a weapon in each hand, allowing you to hack away at someone's neck a couple of paces away, while simultaneously tearing a bullet-hole in someone's eye way down the street. Well, theoretically. Of course, you're more likely to hold a shield in one of those mitts rather than a rocket launcher, but it's nice to have a choice. The game takes place mostly in large outdoor areas and the map design will be reminiscent of that in *Jedi Knight*, which is no bad thing. The Chinese motif gives Infinite Machines a perfect excuse to play around with cool swords and quaint buildings, and there is also plenty of material in the country's mythology for them to draw some impressive creatures. Watch it become an instant legend early next year.



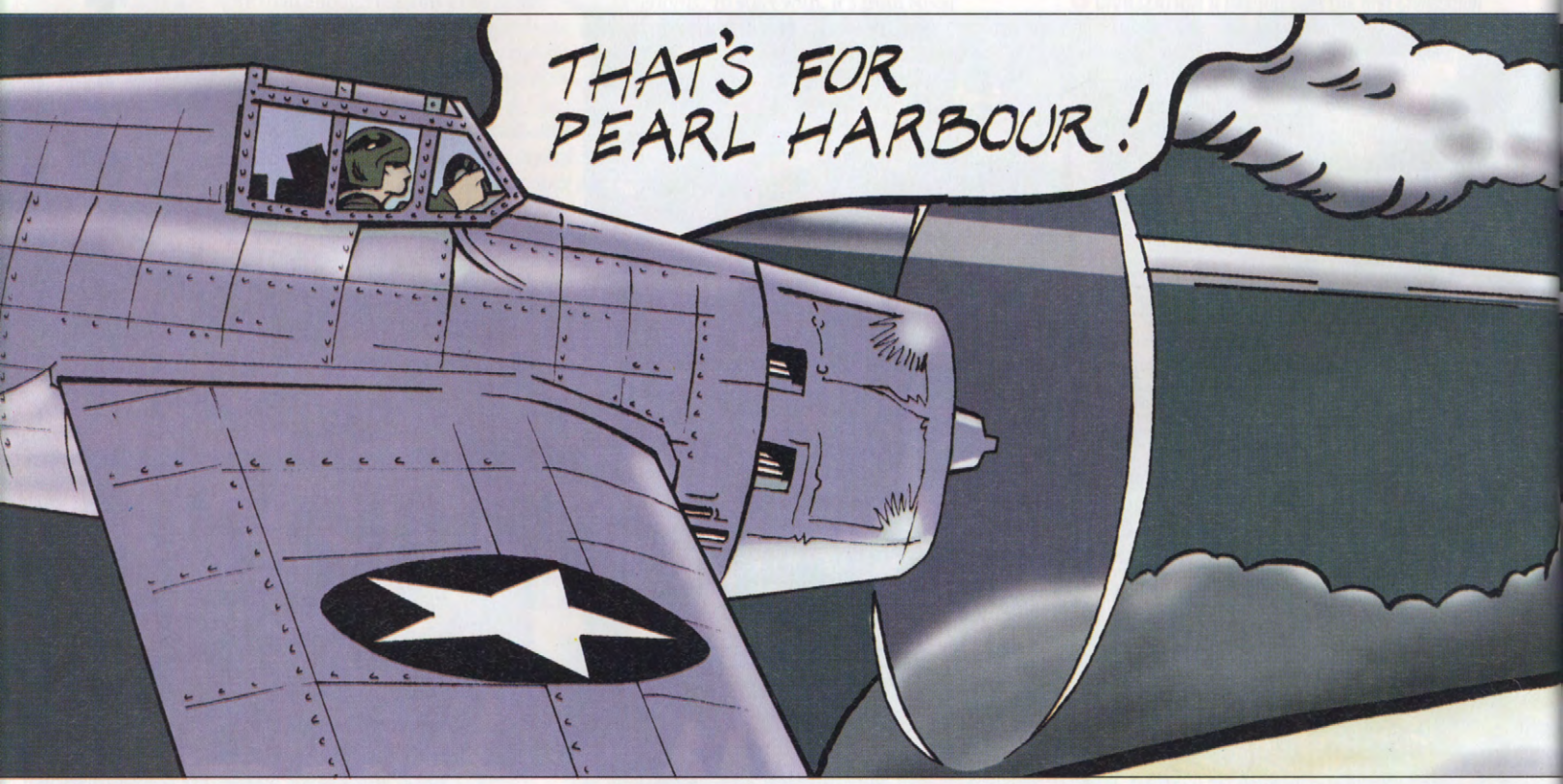
We're hoping decapitation is a big thing in *New Legends*.



Are those sticks of dynamite on that axe?



Must be a cut-scene, unless there's something we don't know.

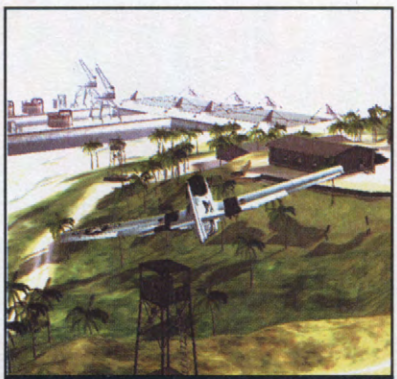


1942... THE BITTER REVENGE OF PEARL HARBOUR IS FLOODING THE PACIFIC... ROOKIES ARE NEEDED, FAST...

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Shoot, drive, fly and die. Just like in a real war.


The amount of detail is unbelievable. You'd actually feel guilty shooting this guy.


All the flight models are accurately recreated.

THE KILLING FIELDS

World War II is here again with *Battlefield: 1942*

Sweden may have been neutral during the war, but it seems that Swedish developer Digital Illusion CE has taken it upon itself to intervene with another WWII title. Although its previous attempt, *Codename: Eagle*, didn't receive too high a score in these pages (many of you felt we seriously underrated it), *Battlefield: 1942* looks set to silence any critics. Apart from sharing its predecessors love for colons, *Battlefield* features a radical improvement in the graphical department and introduces air battles as well as the more traditional first-person shooter mode. Not only that, the *Hidden and Dangerous*-style part of the game is complemented by vehicle-driving and bomber missions. Scenarios include Guadacanal, the Battle of Kursk, Iwo Jima, Stalingrad, Arnheim and El Alamein, which we're sure must mean something to all you WWII fanatics. Digital Illusion assure us it is creating proper flight models for all the aeroplanes featured in the game, so flight-sim fans will find plenty to chew on. The main interest, however, is bound to be on the straight shooter aspect. Considering how much better than *Codename: Eagle* it looks, and how much attention to detail has gone into it, *Battefield* could be a winner when it arrives on these shores towards the middle of next year. Then we'll be able to find out if the multiplayer aspect is any match for *Counter-Strike*.

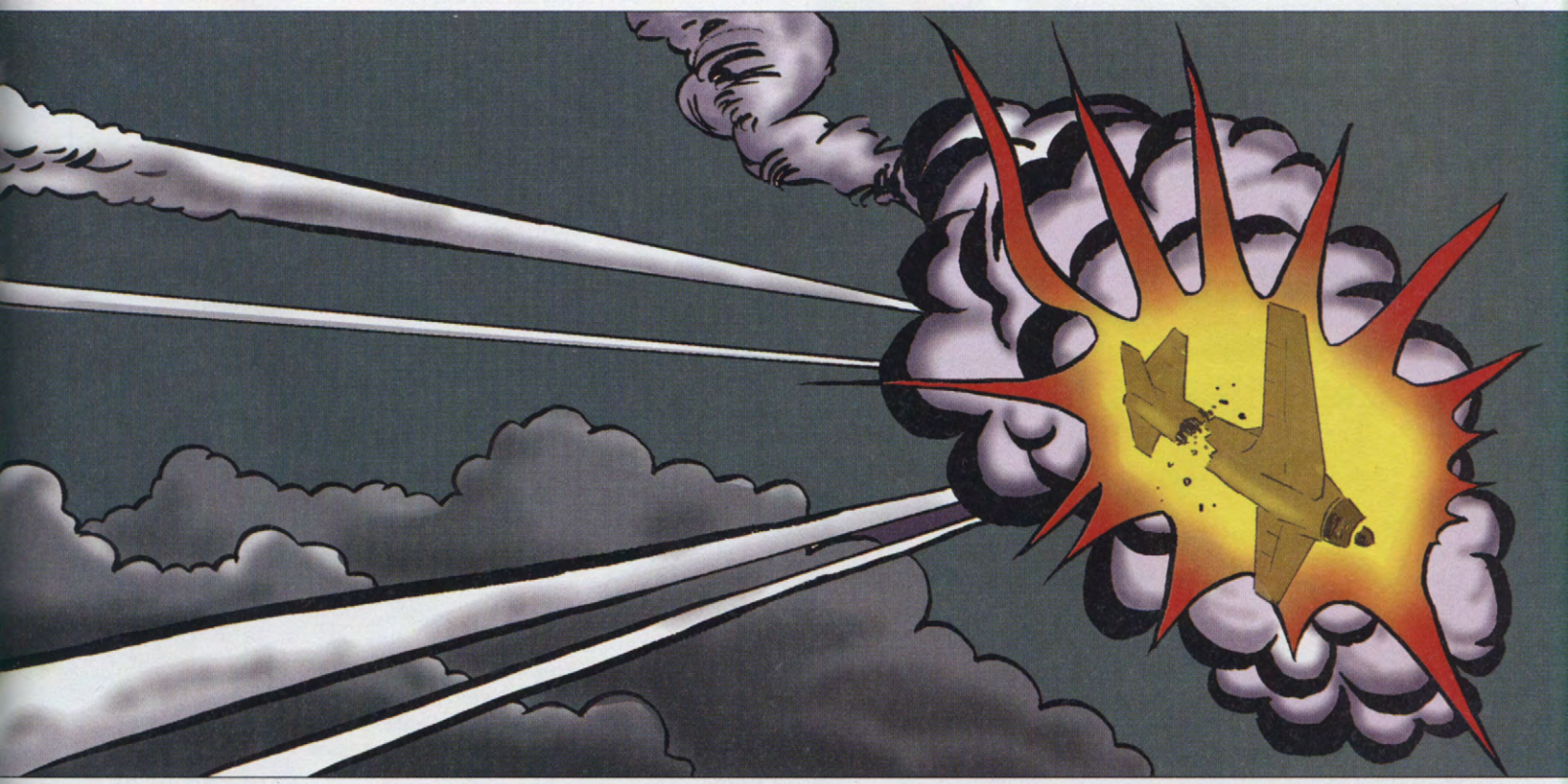
SHORTS

THIS IS NECROCIDE!
NovaLogic is publishing an action horror game going by the unusual title of *Necrocide: The Dead Must Die*. It may sound like a '70s horror film from Spain, but you apparently take on the role of a female vampire battling other monsters. Due next spring.

EVIL ISLANDS
Evil Islands is a real-time and turn-based RPG from Nival Interactive featuring 3D graphics, 50 open-ended missions and a host of monsters to battle with. The game will have a strong strategic element and should work a treat in both single and multiplayer. No publisher or release date as yet.







CHARTS

Everything you need to know about which games are selling by the shedload, plus the buzz on the streets – where you tell us what's hot and what's not



Voyager battles with the *Age Of Empires II* expansion pack.

THE Virgin megastores TOP 10

SEP	OCT	TITLE	DEVELOPER	PUBLISHER	SCORE
NE	1	**VOYAGER: ELITE FORCE**	RAVEN	ACTIVISION	84%
NE	2	AGE OF EMPIRES II: THE CONQUERORS	ENSEMBLE STUDIOS	MICROSOFT	79%
NE	3	THE SIMS: LIVIN' IT UP	MAXIS	EA	63%
3	4	THE SIMS	MAXIS	EA	86%
NE	5	THE SIMS AND LIVIN' IT UP PACK	MAXIS	EA	NR
2	6	DEUS EX	ION STORM	EIDOS	94%
NE	7	FOOTBALL MANAGER 2001	EA SPORTS	EA	67%
NE	8	CARMAGEDDON TDR 2000	TORUS GAMES	SCi	69%
1	9	GRAND PRIX 3	GEOFF CRAMMOND	HASBRO	80%
4	10	SHOGUN	CREATIVE ASSEMBLY	EA	93%

THE ChartTrack TOP10 ELSPA

SEP	OCT	TITLE	DEVELOPER	PUBLISHER	SCORE
NE	1	A.O.E II: THE CONQUERORS	ENSEMBLE STUDIOS	MICROSOFT	79%
NE	2	VOYAGER: ELITE FORCE	RAVEN	ACTIVISION	84%
NE	3	THE SIMS: LIVIN' IT UP	MAXIS	EA	63%
NE	4	FOOTBALL MANAGER 2001	EA SPORTS	EA	67%
1	5	THE SIMS	MAXIS	EA	86%
2	6	DEUS EX	ION STORM	EIDOS	94%
7	7	A.O.E II: THE AGE OF KINGS	ENSEMBLE STUDIOS	MICROSOFT	89%
4	8	CM – SEASON 99/00	SPORTS INTERACTIVE	EIDOS	92%
3	9	GRAND PRIX 3	GEOFF CRAMMOND	HASBRO	80%
NE	10	THE SIMS AND LIVIN' IT UP PACK	MAXIS	EA	NR

(Compiled by Chart Track © ELSPA 2000)

THE BUZZ ON THE STREETS

"I couldn't understand why the so called 'best ever game' that is *Deus Ex* is now at number six. It didn't even make number one last month. It seems the computer game charts are now getting as unreliable as the music charts."

Brentz

"I'm not surprised Microsoft has managed to get *The Conquerors* to number one, *GP3* is going down quicker than I expected and *Deus Ex* deserves to be at the top."

Glyndwr

"*Deus Ex* is the thinking man's action game, I guess that's why it's slipping down the charts. Dunces make up the bulk of this country."

Cultist

"As a newcomer to the delights of *Counter-Strike*, I can't believe that *Half-Life* isn't top of the tree. Everyone should be forced to buy a copy now to keep it at the top of the charts forever."

Foxile

"*The Sims* being in there three times shows that there are a lot of people buying it – a lot of people who don't normally buy games. The rest of the chart is just full of sequels except for the mighty *Deus Ex* and the fun *Elite Force*. Shame."

Gedalia, London

"A smart move by Microsoft, releasing *The Conquerors* add-on while there's still interest in the original. Others left it too long and public interest was too low so the add-on flopped (*Urban Ops UK* anyone? I for one won't be buying it.)"

Splog, Edinburgh

CHART COMMENT

BASED ON CHART TRACK TOP 10

Can there be any greater injustice than *Deus Ex* slipping to 6th position? Although Ion Storm should probably congratulate itself. Since when has chart success been any indication of artistic merit? It would almost be an insult to the genius of the game if the masses had gone out in droves and bought it.

***The Sims'* domination continues. If you add up the sales of the original, the add-on expansion and the pack that combines both of them, it probably outsells every game on this page. Most of us may be sick of it, but remember, hardcore gamers are just a minority of the PC-owning population. Anyway, we'll soon be seeing the return of a chart legend. The next *Champ Man* is almost upon us.**

Mark Hill

RETRO CHARTS

1 YEAR AGO...

1 Tiberian Sun *(EA)*
2 System Shock 2 *(EA)*
3 Championship Manager 3 *(Eidos)*
4 Kingpin *(Interplay)*
5 Hidden & Dangerous *(Take 2)*

2 YEARS AGO...

1 Commandos: Behind Enemy Lines *(Eidos)*
2 Premier Manager 98 *(Gremlin)*
3 Titanic – Adventure Out Of Time *(Europress)*
4 World Cup 98 *(EA)*
5 X-Files: Unrestricted Access *(Fox)*

5 YEARS AGO...

1 The 7th Guest *(Virgin)*
2 Star Trek TNG: A Final Unity *(Microprose)*
3 MechWarrior 2 *(Activision)*
4 Day Of The Tentacle *(LucasArts)*
5 Indy Card Racing *(Virgin)*

COMPETITION

WIN THE ENTIRE VIRGIN TOP 10!

***PC ZONE* and Virgin have teamed up to give you the chance to win every game in the current Top 10. All you have to do to enter the draw is answer this simple question:**

QUESTION: What is the name of *Voyager*'s resident Vulcan?

Just answer the above question and send it on a postcard, along with *all* the information requested, to the address below.

- *Name / Address / Postcode / Daytime phone number / Email / Job title / Company name / Age if under 18*
- *Please tell us if you do not wish to receive details of further special offers or new products from other companies*
- *Are you a current subscriber to* PC ZONE*?*

Answers on a postcard to: *PC ZONE* Chart Compo (CPCZ0012A), Dennis Publishing, PO Box 154, Bradford BD1 5RZ. Closing date: Wednesday 15 Nov.

- *Terms and conditions: Winners will be notified by post. No cash alternative. Prizes not necessarily as shown. No correspondence will be entered into. The Ed's decision is final. All the other usual competition rules, conditions and restrictions apply.*



A random map generator should ensure its longevity. Particularly in multiplayer.

KOHAN THE BARBARIAN

Kohan: Immortal Sovereigns, the first effort from TimeGate Studios, is lining up to be one of the more interesting of the fantasy RTSs that are currently casting their ogre-shaped shadows over the strategy landscape. Although unlikely to win any prizes for the catchiness of its title, *Kohan* does make an effort to breathe some fresh air into a crowded genre. The feature TimeGate is most proud of is its troop-based combat, which dispenses altogether with micro-management and gives each military company a number of attributes, such as fatigue, morale and visual range. The game as a whole steals and borrows from everywhere, and while the main gameplay is based around strategic battles, there's also a great deal of resource management, politics and economics. To keep it tight and interesting, the plot actually plays an important role rather than simply providing an excuse for tiny men to beat up tiny orcs.

A BUNCH OF ARX

Role-playing and FPS in a fantasy setting...

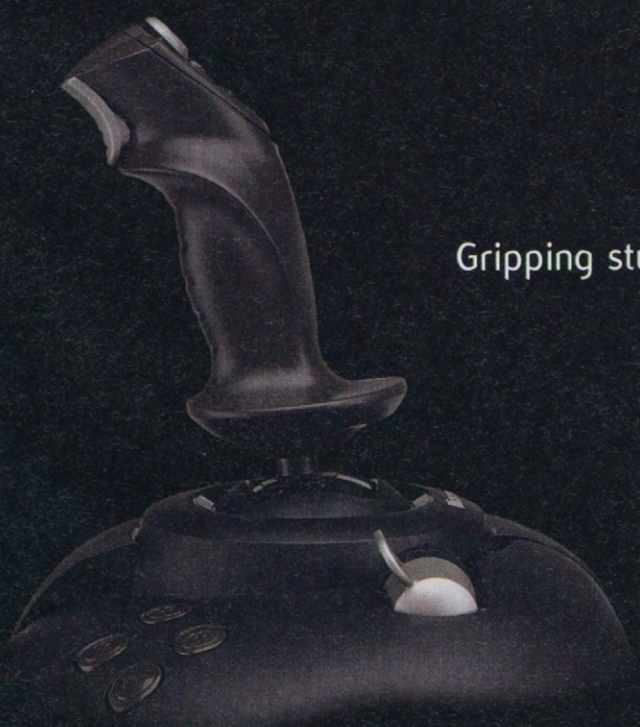
Combining first-person shooters with RPGs has already been done successfully (in the superlative *System Shock 2* and *Deus Ex*), but for some reason we haven't seen it done in a traditional fantasy setting. Arizona-based Arkane Studios is hoping to remedy this with *Arx*. The strange title refers to a frozen world where all life, magical and otherwise, has been forced underground. But don't be fooled into thinking *Arx* is a claustrophobic dungeon crawler. Beneath the surface lie giant lakes and massive cities, populated by various races and civilisations. In the vein of *Deus Ex*, your character will possess a series of skills you'll be able to acquire and improve throughout the game. Ion Storm's instant classic can also be felt in the type of non-player AI that Arkane is trying to develop, and the freedom of actions and their repercussions on the gaming world. It is introducing a unique spellcasting system that will allow you to throw fireballs and freeze spells without too much interface hassle, by actually drawing shapes with your own screen hand (an idea also used in *Black & White*). No publisher has signed it up yet and we'll have to wait until mid next year to see if it can live up to expectations.



A spell and a spider. Yesterday.



Other characters won't attack you unless provoked.



Gripping stuff

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Powerful explosions. Bone shaking impacts. Rattling turbulence. Giddy g-forces. Blow your opponents away with the Sidewinder® Force Feedback 2 joystick. Hang on for dear life as you experience realistic, lightning fast forces. Get to grips with amazing accuracy and precision. Feel the force feedback as you use the programmable buttons to execute your favourite actions. Fasten your seat belt and take your game play to new heights. Talk about white knuckles. **Grab hold of a Force Feedback 2 joystick today.**

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94%

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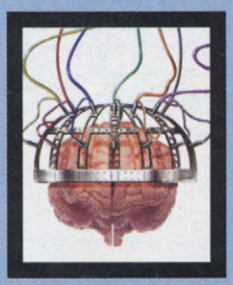
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PC CD ROM

INFOGRAMES

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TECHHEAD ECTS 2000 SPECIAL

Hardware companies from all over the globe came out of hiding for the recent ECTS show in London

WORDS Carlos Ruiz

INTEL VS AMD: ROUND 2

It's fight night, and the PIII/Athlon clash was just a taster – a prelude to the main event...

Intel has been affectionately known as 'Chipzilla' in hardware circles for some time now, presumably because of its habitual giant lizard-type domination of everywhere it decides to set up camp. A couple of years ago, if you wanted a cheap and cheerful processor, you'd get a Celeron. Performance users would go straight for the jugular with a fast Pentium II, while the best ingredient for a work server would be a mega-expensive Xeon. All made by Chipzilla, of course.

Then in 1999, AMD did the unthinkable and stormed straight into contention with the Athlon, which was clearly faster than the current Pentium III at the time. Since then, AMD has bettered, or at least matched Intel, move for move. Can they do it again?



As well as ensuring the Pentium 4 isn't second best to AMD's Palomino, Intel must concentrate on solving its supply problems.

INTEL AND THE PENTIUM 4

Intel's (www.intel.com) senior vice president Albert Yu recently demonstrated a Pentium 4 (previously code-named 'Willamette') chip running at 2GHz – a pretty impressive display of what the next-gen part is already capable of. But, as the discerning hardware guru would tell you, performance isn't measured only in clock speeds.

Thankfully, besides being able to clock up insane speeds with relative ease, the P4 also looks technically sound. The new architecture is called 'NetBurst', and has been designed to improve Internet and multimedia related performance in areas such as imaging, streaming video, speech and 3D graphics.

The new Hyper Pipelined Technology consists of a 20-stage pipeline; almost double that of the 12-stage Pentium III pipeline, while the brand new 400MHz system bus (100MHz quad-pumped) triples system bandwidth up to 3.2Gb/s. In addition, the second-generation Streaming SIMD Extension (SSE2) comprises 144 new instructions, and offers improved performance in multimedia applications that require greater precision.

The first commercially available P4 will be a 1.4GHz part with 256Kb of full speed, on-die cache. Production will begin in a 0.18micron process, but Intel will switch to 0.13micron late next year, probably around the time when SDRAM (and DDR RAM, if rumours are to be believed) motherboards will be available for P4 processors. The first Intel 850-based motherboards will only support a dual-channel RDRAM set-up, which means early buyers will need to buy two RIMMS for their P4 systems.

AMD AND THE PALOMINO

AMD (www.amd.com) is now ready to challenge Intel in all three main sectors of CPU sales: budget, mainstream and server. This will be done with the Morgan, Palomino and Mustang series respectively, all based around the same second-generation Athlon core.

The new core has a number of new features and departures from the first-gen Athlon. By shrinking the die area, smaller and cooler chips can be produced, and adding more stages to the original 10-stage pipeline makes for better performance. Additional '3DNow!' instructions have also been implemented, which improve speed on supported applications.

The Palomino, which will go head-to-head with the Pentium 4, should start out somewhere between 1.3 and 1.5GHz. With 512Kb of full speed on-die cache, it immediately has a leg up over the P4's 256Kb, although only real-world tests will determine whether this translates into better performance.

Palomino chips will reportedly be able to take advantage of a 133MHz DDR Front Side Bus (effectively 266MHz), and the die will initially be manufactured in a copper 0.18micron process. As with the P4, production will migrate to a 0.13micron process in late 2001, allowing for clock speeds to be upped to around the 2GHz mark.

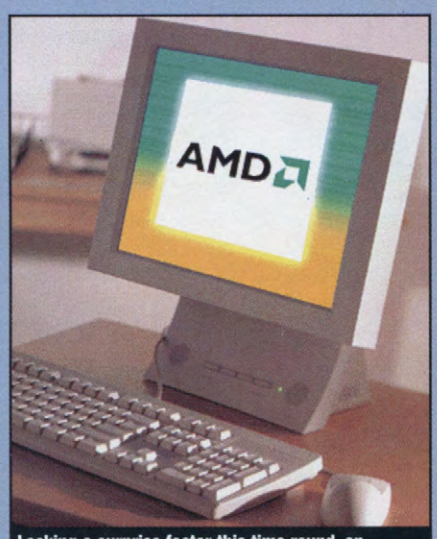
The Palomino's standard Socket A configuration means that it is backwards compatible with VIA's current KT133-based motherboards (see Fact Cannon, opposite), but new 'boards will be available at the time of release, such as ones based on AMD's 760 and VIA's KX266 chipsets.

...AND THE MORGAN

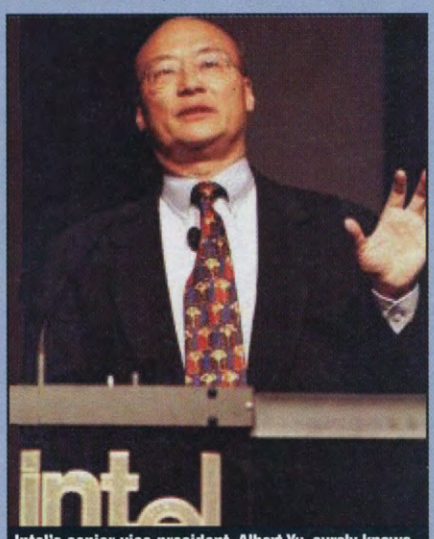
The Morgan series will take over from the Duron and continue to do battle with Intel's Celeron series in the low-cost arena. Debuting at around 900MHz, they will be equipped with 64Kb-128Kb of L2 cache and run on a 100MHz DDR bus. The lower specs ensure that no sales will be taken away from the Palomino, although value-conscious buyers will undoubtedly be pleased with an excellent price/performance ratio. Supported motherboards include those based on VIA's KM133 and SiS's 730S chipsets.

IT'S A KNOCKOUT

So there you have it. You could study technical details all day long and still not know which is the faster: Pentium 4 or Palomino? However, when the 1.4GHz P4 chips start arriving in late October, we'll be able see exactly how much performance difference there is between the two and the nearest equivalent Pentium III. The 1.5GHz version is expected to be out before Christmas, by which time both the Palomino and Morgan chips will be seeing the light of day. Don't know about you, but we can't wait to watch the action unfold...



Lacking a surprise factor this time round, an extended effort is required from AMD. However, they are on a roll, and the industry knows it.



Intel's senior vice president, Albert Yu, surely knows that massive brand recognition alone will not win the day for Intel – innovation is needed.

G400 REVAMP

Matrox check the award-winning G400 series in for a makeover



The new, smaller box saves Matrox a packet on materials and shipping costs.

Matrox won countless awards and much-needed respect from the gaming community with its immensely capable G400 cards, which among other things offered fantastic Direct3D performance, superb image quality and hardware bump mapping. Although the big daddy of the pack, the G400 MAX, had slightly questionable OpenGL performance and proved hard to get hold of early on, these faults were rectified within months of release. The MAX went on to win our 'Best Performer' accolade in the definitive roundup of *PCZ* #84, holding off NVIDIA's powerful TNT2 Ultra chipset and signalling a comeback for Matrox in the world of gaming.

WE WANT A G600

However, it wasn't really to be. The G400 cards surfaced more than a year ago and, while NVIDIA and 3dfx have since enjoyed much success with subsequent chipsets, Matrox has kept very quiet. So quiet, in fact, that you'd certainly have expected it to come up with something pretty spectacular in the meantime. Although not the subject of this particular article, Matrox does have a true next-generation chipset in the works. For now, though, the Canadian firm is offering the G450 family of cards, aimed squarely at people who want a bit of flexibility in a reasonably-priced product.

All are based on a G400 core that has been combined with faster DDR memory, made smaller and more efficient. Curiously, though, instead of upping clock rates and widening memory bandwidth for better performance, Matrox has used the cooler chip to enable further enhancement of their multimedia capabilities.

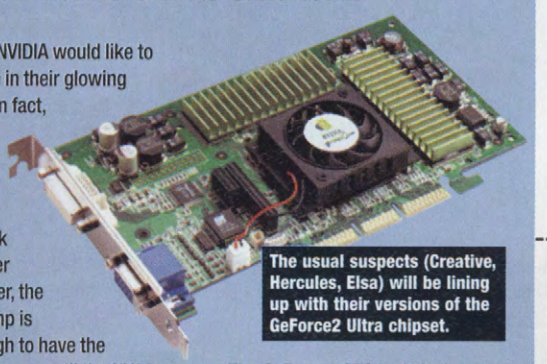
So, while the standard and DVI-support G450 cards allow an improved DualHead (multi-monitor) feature to be taken up by a mass market, with prices hovering below and above the £100 mark, performance in games hardly even matches that of the year-old G400 MAX. The Marvel G450 eTV, meanwhile, offers multimedia buffs a chance to get a sneak preview of heaven itself, with endless features to mess around with for less than £150 (far too many to list here, so get down to www.matrox.com/mga/home if you're interested).

FEEL THE FORCE (AGAIN)

NVIDIA's GeForce2 chipset breaks new barriers in its Ultra form

In the cut-throat world of new PC hardware, it always pays to swot up before making a purchase – not only in order to make the best choice and pay the least cash, but also to guarantee you won't be disappointed when something better arrives the following month. In essence, pages like these are supposed to aid you in your quest, but even we couldn't have told you that the GeForce2 GTS would be superseded quite this soon.

The GeForce2 Ultra is not the kind of revolutionary advance in graphics technology that NVIDIA would like to have you believe in their glowing press releases. In fact, the speed increase over the GTS is gained primarily from higher clock speeds and faster memory. However, the performance jump is significant enough to have the Ultra act as a stopgap until the NV20 arrives early next year.



The usual suspects (Creative, Hercules, Elsa) will be lining up with their versions of the GeForce2 Ultra chipset.



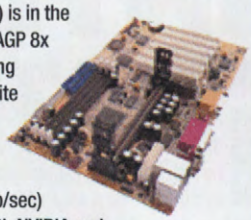
With, and without: the clear advantages that NVIDIA's bump mapping can offer.

The GeForce2 GTS had clock speeds of 200/333MHz (core and memory), while the Ultra has 250/460MHz. This increases the potential triangles per second from 25million to 31million, and the potential gigatexels per clock from 1.6 to 2. It's as simple as that.

With regards to the NV20, which will be designed with DirectX 8.0 in mind (of course, games using DX8 won't exist in numbers until next year) and manufactured in a 0.15micron process (which won't be ready until late this year), you can see why NVIDIA chose to delay it. The GeForce2 Ultra reigns supreme for the moment, with only 3dfx's non-existent Voodoo5 6000 waiting in the wings to challenge it – but wouldn't you rather wait for the NV20?

FACTCANNON

Anyone about to build a PC around the new, cheaper Athlon 'Thunderbird' or Duron CPUs should definitely consider one of the latest Abit (KT7) and Asus (A7V) motherboards based on VIA's KT133 chipset. Both Socket A boards are now well known for their speed, stability and great features – and fully support upcoming AMD processors, as well as UDMA/100 and AGP Pro for future hard disks and graphics cards. See www.abit.com and www.asus.com for more details.



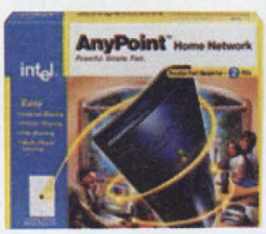
Intel (www.intel.com) is in the midst of developing the AGP 8x specification for upcoming motherboards that, despite using a similar 32-bit bus to the current AGP4x, have double the potential bandwidth (2Gb/sec) and speed (533MHz). Both NVIDIA and Matrox, who are assisting Intel in development, should be getting in on the act with brand new AGP 8x graphics cards next year.

For a free taster of Microsoft's upcoming multiplayer voice chat utility, you can download the limited-feature Game Voice Share from www.gamevoice.com. If you've used Roger Wilco or BattleCom before, you'll know roughly what to expect – although Microsoft's implementation combined with DirectX 8.0 should prove to be better and more popular. The full Game Voice software is bundled with a headset and control pad, check out our review on page 126.

Plextor (www.plextor.com) has upped the stakes in the CD-RW arena yet again, weighing in with the 12/10/32A. In case you're not clued up about this kind of thing, that suggests speeds of 12x write, 10x rewrite and 32x read – which is very fast. The internal drive uses an IDE interface, ensuring that no expensive SCSI add-in cards are needed, and the BURN-Proof feature means you can safely use your PC for Windows and Internet tasks while writing to a CD, without fear of data errors.

If you want to skirt around the complexities of setting up an Ethernet LAN (that's Local Area Network for the uninitiated) in your home, get your mitts on Intel's Anypoint USB kit. It contains all you need to network your USB-equipped PCs together, and it's an absolute doddle to set up, so you can be LAN gaming in absolutely no time at all. All the details can be found at www.intel.com

3dfx's (www.3dfx.com), once again, showed poor financial results at the end of the fiscal year, with clear signs that NVIDIA (www.nvidia.com) is still hitting them where it hurts, and getting very rich in the process. So it's ironic then that 3dfx is currently being sued by NVIDIA for alleged patent infringement on no less than five counts. NVIDIA is seeking an injunction restraining 3dfx from manufacturing, selling or importing certain products, as well as [illegible] monetary damages.





If God created all men equal, how will you get the upper hand?

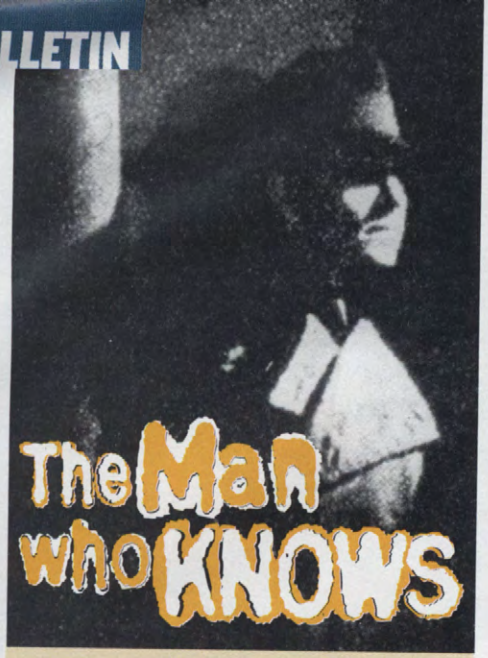
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Microsoft

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SWEET AND TENDER HOOLIGANS

The government has slammed a sick new game that revels in football violence. ***Hooligans – Storm Over Europe*** is a real-time strategy affair being developed by **The Thirteenth Production**, based in **Amsterdam**, scene of some minor skirmishes during the recent **Euro 2000** tournament. According to its press release, "the object is to become the most notorious group of hooligans in Europe. You must kill, maim and destroy the opposing hooligan gangs. You muster and control your faithful troops by administering drugs, alcohol and, of course, a good dose of violence every now and then. They must become true followers of your faction, for better or worse. Not only good strategic skills are required but also a good political mindset and managing capabilities to keep your troops happy and violent. During the European football season you will travel through Europe to visit several venues where you will do battle with opponent gangs. Whoever is victorious and catches the public's attention in the media will end up the most notorious and frightful bunch of hooligans in Europe and the world! A title that every hooligan loves to fight for! Ask not what your team can do for you, but what you can do for your team! The only thing to fear is running out of beer..."

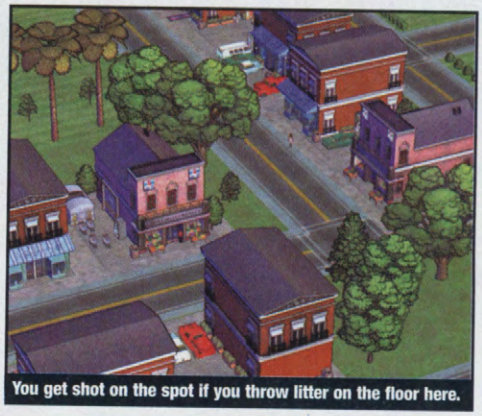
Predictably, the oxygen of publicity has been freely proffered by several newspapers, and a message on the **official *Hooligans* website** declares: "Since the press has gotten a notion of this game we have been interviewed numerous times in regards to the amount of violence in the game. We have decided to publish all the interviews we can find. We want to make it clear that our view is, that this game is violent, yet it does not glorify violence nor is it meant to inspire people to smash each other brains in 'real life'. It should be considered a game which is fun to play. Violence is a problem of this mass society yet everybody has an individual responsibility."

Hooligans has yet to secure a UK publisher, and a **Home Office** spokesperson said: "We condemn anything that seeks to glorify hooliganism. We're working very hard to stamp it out and any firm or individual which encourages it is acting irresponsibly."

Meanwhile, ***Gianluca Vialli's Premiership Manager*** has been thrown into turmoil following the sacking of the shiny-pated Italian, who is consequently no longer in the Premiership or a manager. Publisher ***Midas Games*** insists that the release will go ahead, and a spokesperson said: "Obviously we've signed Vialli and not Chelsea, so we can still use the name without conflict. People will still buy it. Only a small number would be attracted by the Chelsea affiliation. If anything, the publicity will help and by the time the game is out we expect Vialli to be at another prominent European club." A golf club, maybe?



The Texas Chainsaw Massacre house wonderfully recreated.



You get shot on the spot if you throw litter on the floor here.

VILLAGE OF THE SIMMED

The Sims goes to town

Considering the almost nauseating dominance of the charts that *The Sims* and its recently released add-on *Livin' It Up* is having, it comes as no surprise that Maxis is already working on another incarnation of the game. *SimsVille* combines the macro-management of the *SimCity* series with the more individual approach of *The Sims*. So, instead of cities or houses, you get villages where you can build shops, homes and factories while, at the same time, following the adventures, triumphs and personal tragedies of the inhabiting Sims. You won't be able to control the critters directly but you'll be able to influence their lives by altering their surroundings and catering to their tastes. As you can see from the screenshots, *SimsVille* offers a kiddies' friendly approach, with pastel crayon colours and Postman Pat towns. We'll have to wait until next year to see whether it can appeal to adults as well.

GREAT GAMING CLICHÉS

The games industry is littered with clichés and we're going to explore every one of them. Let's start with one of the worst offenders...

#1. EYE CANDY

Although not restricted to the gaming arena, this over-used metaphor has become synonymous with good looking games and unimaginative, lazy writing. As games and the machines they run on have advanced, the graphics on display have become flashier, faster, more colourful and more three-dimensional. All this visual glucose is usually celebrated with a succession of hyperboles, such as "stunning", "incredible" and "awesome". However, the term (which apparently derives from ear candy, for beautiful music, and nose candy, for cocaine) is a double-edged compliment. After all, candy is hardly a nutritious, wholesome meal with a variety of flavour nuances, is it? It's vacuous titles such as *Myst* that suppurate eye candy all over the place without actually giving you a proper game to play. At this point in time we seem to have reached an impasse where graphics are concerned. Opinions on whether they are important change all the time to suit the circumstances. One thing is clear though, eye candy is here to stay. Now pass me a Mars bar, my retina is feeling peckish.



Eye candy – we'd never use a cliché like that. Or would we?

THE LATEST ON...



THREE KINGDOMS: FATE OF THE DRAGON

Eidos' possible *Age Of Empires* beater is now scheduled to be released early next year. Among new features announced are the multiple ways of winning: military, economic and political. More interestingly, *Three Kingdoms* will give you plebs the opportunity to learn something about the culture and technology of early Chinese society.



BLACK & WHITE

It looks increasingly likely that the sure-fire masterpiece won't be released until after Christmas. Lionhead won't be rushed into an early deadline and Peter Molyneux has said the fact that it's such "a hugely ambitious project coupled with our desire to make it the best it can possibly be, led us to take the decision to continue development for an extra four weeks to exploit all of the game's potential."



SIMON THE SORCERER 3D

Poor Simon keeps on getting delayed, with the latest Hasbro schedule hazarding a release in late November. Maybe Headfirst has been asked to introduce more *Harry Potter*-style elements into the game making it easier to market to the masses and enhancing its chances of success. It really does take quite a lot of magic to turn an adventure game into a bestseller these days.



TRIBES II

Another title to be delayed is the ambitious Dynamix multiplayer title. A spokesperson for the company gave the predictable but logical explanation that they'd "decided it would be best to extend the beta test and appropriately finesse the game so it meets the highest standards. This means we will be able to ensure the greater compatibility testing and play balancing that a game of this scale requires." We imagine it will be early 2001 before it hits the shelves.



SQUAD LEADER

The more we see of Hasbro's tactical combat game, the more we look forward it. Essentially a WWII *X-COM* title, or a turn-based *Hidden & Dangerous*, if you prefer to look at it that way, *Squad Leader* has soldiers with unique skills and weaknesses, that react to situations with fear or courage. Giving the game a slight RPG scope, you can also build up your squad, eventually turning them into an elite combat troop. Should hit the shelves late October.



ALICE

EA has just announced that its surrealist take on the Lewis Carroll stories won't include any multiplayer options. This comes as something of a shock considering it uses the *Quake III* engine. A spokesperson said certain design issues and the limitations of current technology meant it couldn't recreate the standard of the single-player game in multiplayer. Shame, we were looking forward to playing a pack of cards.

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO...

The place to get hold of the latest news on the games that have been delayed



On their time off, they date, play sport and fall out with their parents. And that's just the bugs.

STARSHIP TROOPERS

FIRST SEEN: 1997
ORIGINAL RELEASE DATE: 1998
NEW RELEASE DATE: November 10

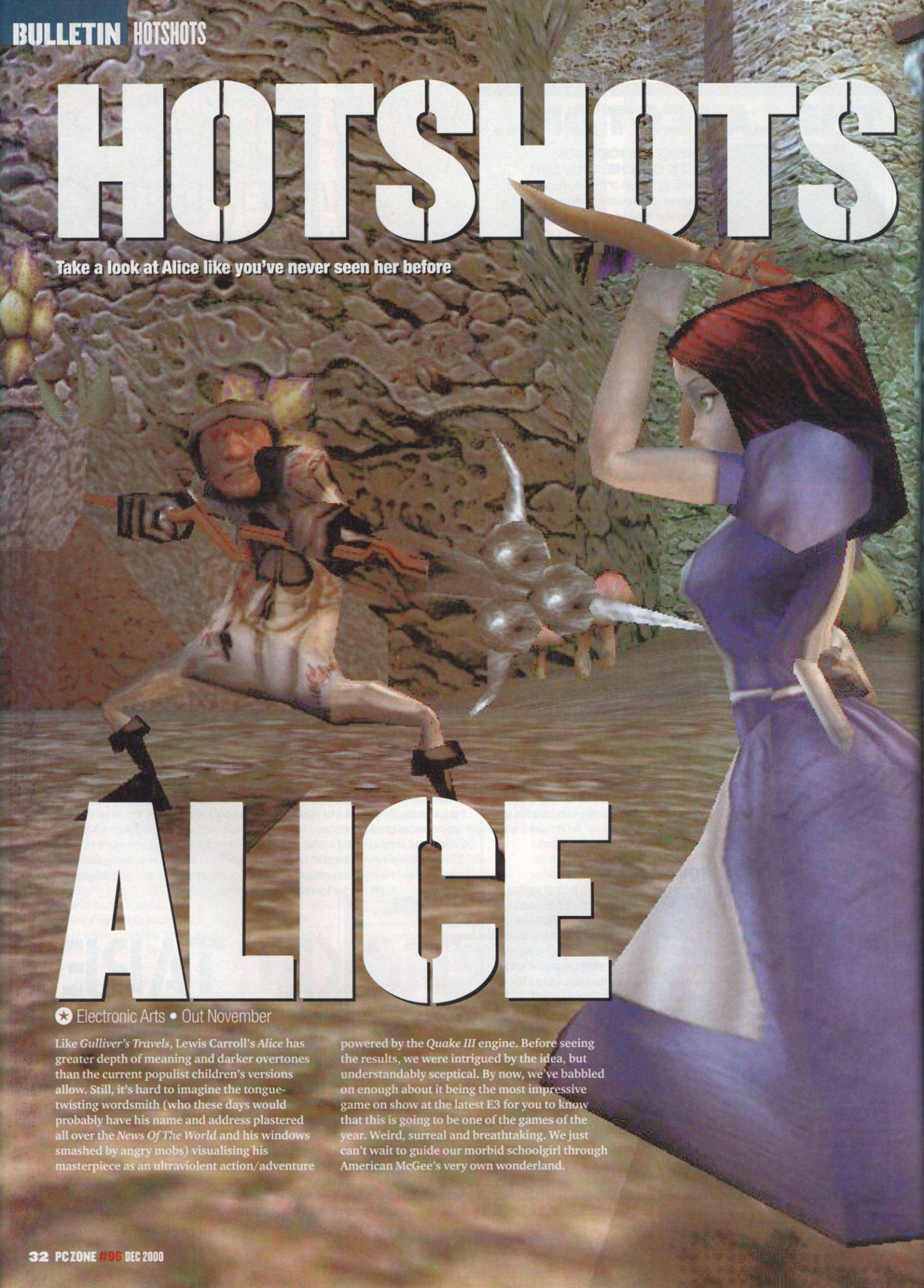
Originally scheduled to ride the wave of success of the Paul Verhoeven film adaptation of Robert Henlein's book, this game has undergone some serious changes in the last couple of years. What started off as a third-person action game using the *Unreal* engine has transformed into a 3D real-time strategy with a completely different engine and a completely different concept. Taking an interface that is similar to the film's interactive news and the powersuit armour that makes the soldiers so powerful in Henlein's novel, there should be enough to satisfy both RTS and sci-fi fans. But while the film was a fabulously over-the-top blast of sarcasm aimed at teenage movies and modern war propaganda, the game is a far more straightforward attempt to break into an established and crowded genre. Controlling soldiers and military units against giant bugs has all been done, in some way or another, before. Like *Force Commander*, the success of *Starship Troopers* will depend on how much it makes you feel part of an intergalactic war and how much you can relate to the film. After suffering understandable delays, the game should finally see the light of day in November.

TICKERTAPE

STARTS++In a move that suggests a radical change to future Lara Croft releases (as soon as the next gen consoles hit the market), Core has announced it will be including a level editor in *Tomb Raider Chronicles*. At last you'll be able to create that all-girl sauna level you always wanted to play.**++STOP++**The original may be suffering delays, but plans are already being made for a *Black & White* sequel. The news follows the announcement of the Black & White Studios, an off-shoot of Lionhead that will be responsible for taking the game to PS2 and X-Box as well as working on the sequel. **++STOP++**In more sequel news Raven Studios has been talking about possible sequels to *Soldier Of Fortune* and *Voyager: Elite Force*. Now that the company has finished preparing the gold (US only) edition for *Soldier Of Fortune*, the rumours may come to fruition quite soon.**++STOP++** In yet more rumours, we've heard that Westwood could be working on another *Dune* game, subtitled *Emperor*, as well as its first persistent online world game, called *Earth and Beyond*. Westwood recently bought the domain names for the above, but no official announcement has been made.**++ENDS**

HOTSHOTS

Take a look at Alice like you've never seen her before



ALICE

Electronic Arts • Out November

Like *Gulliver's Travels*, Lewis Carroll's *Alice* has greater depth of meaning and darker overtones than the current populist children's versions allow. Still, it's hard to imagine the tongue-twisting wordsmith (who these days would probably have his name and address plastered all over the *News Of The World* and his windows smashed by angry mobs) visualising his masterpiece as an ultraviolent action/adventure powered by the *Quake III* engine. Before seeing the results, we were intrigued by the idea, but understandably sceptical. By now, we've babbled on enough about it being the most impressive game on show at the latest E3 for you to know that this is going to be one of the games of the year. Weird, surreal and breathtaking. We just can't wait to guide our morbid schoolgirl through American McGee's very own wonderland.



















MAILBOX



***CM* blues, the PC's cloudy future, violent games and corrupted youth. It's all going off this month**

ANSWERED BY Dave Woods

CONTACT INFO

Write to us, and if your letter is selected as Letter Of The Month we'll send you a prize.

WRITE TO **Mailbox, *PC ZONE*, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1P 5FF**

EMAIL **letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk**

CHAT FORUM If you've got something pressing to say, check out the 'lively' chat forum on our website. Point your browser at **www.pczone.co.uk** for further info.

SUPER PRIZES TO BE WON

For the next few issues of *PC ZONE*, we will be giving away a Microsoft IntelliMouse to everyone who gets a letter printed in Mailbox. These digital rodents are perfect for 3D shooters and games that require a quick and precise response from your pointing device – you can even use them with Windows 98 if you really want to. So get your writing skates on and send us your literary masterpieces. We promise not to be rude when we reply to them. Well, not very.





Is this the same game with slightly different information?

CM BLUES

Doesn't that footy game really annoy you? You know that one where they keep bringing out updates every year and making you pay for them. Really annoying, isn't it? All they change is the season data. What's it called? Yeah, that's it, *Championship Manager*.

I'm starting to get a bit annoyed at the way you guys always have a go at the *FIFA* series for bringing out a new game every year, yet hail the new *Championship Manager* update as the 'gaming event of the year'. Looking down the list of Sports Interactive's titles, all they've done is three *CM*s, and six updates. Personally, I think you should just be able to download a patch with the updates on.

I'm not slagging off the series because I don't like it. I just think you lot should be a little less hard on *FIFA* when *Champ Man* does the same thing without retribution.

By the way, the new Online section is great, especially the article with Steve Hill looking like a prat in *EverQuest* (seeing as he is the main protagonist of the *CM* bias).

Mike Hinton

We asked Steve Hill to comment about this, but he said that he was too busy playing the latest release of *CM* to give it a second thought. You've got a valid point of sorts, but there are a couple of points we'd like to make in our defence.

For a start, the updates of *CM* are only £19.99 and they're stand-alone, so new players can start playing at a bargain price. If EA were to release the latest versions of *FIFA* at under £20, we wouldn't have so much of a beef.

Also, *Championship Manager* needs updating because of the new rules, new stats and the new players. It might amount to little more than a glorified data disc, but that is the essence of *CM*. Without the accurate stats, you'd just have a second-rate management game, instead of a whole new way of life. You know it makes sense.

TOO MUCH, TOO YOUNG

After reading a letter from issue 95 about games causing violence, I felt I had to write this. When will people realise that it is not the games that cause the problems, but the stores and parents that allow someone of any age to pick up a copy of a game, bring it to a counter and pay for it, even when the sign on the box shows the 'Mature' rating sign and an 18-Certificate?

I was in a shop in Kingston the other day and saw a small child, who was about 10-12 years old, pick up a copy of *Kingpin*. He gave the game to his mum and got her to buy it for him. I stood there watching as the mother took the box from him, looked at it, saw the Mature rating on the box, and simply put the game on the counter and paid for it.

Is it just me, or does everything fall into place once someone sees that happen? Although some games are very violent (*Kingpin* and *SOF* spring to mind), they are not suited to smaller children, and this is why they carry the 18-Certificate. Would a mother let her 10-year-old son watch *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*? The same restrictions should apply for games. Therefore, this is a letter to all the parents out there: don't ignore the certificate ratings on the box of a game, they are there for a reason. Just because it's a game, doesn't mean it won't disturb people who are too young to see that sort of material.

Christian D'Amico

We couldn't have said it any better ourselves. Everyone has to take responsibility. If you don't, then you can look forward to tougher censorship laws. Them's the breaks.

THE PC IS DEAD, LONG LIVE THE PC

The future of the PC seems pretty bleak. I'm sure that you've noticed how the next generation of consoles are starting to affect the games that are coming out on the PC. *Felony Pursuit* canned because of problems with the Dreamcast version. *Dungeon Keeper 3* canned because Bullfrog are working on next-generation consoles instead, and Molyneux stating his intention to leave the PC gaming scene after the completion of *Black & White*. *Halo*, thankfully, is going to make it to the PC but it was touch and go for a while, and it's still leading on X-Box.

If I did some research, I'm sure I could find more casualties of this new storm front that is facing PC gaming. So the real question is what does the future hold? I doubt that the PC will disappear. The PC's open architecture means that it will surpass all consoles as time goes by, and it's this that will ensure it survives as a gaming machine, but you can't help but fear what is to come. Take cover... a storm is coming and the PC is going to be in the firing line.

Paul Boland

"Would a mother let her 10-year-old child watch *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre?* The same restrictions should apply to games"

CHRISTIAN D'AMICO DEFENDS MATURE RATINGS

We've been picking up on a lot of this sort of talk recently, but we don't subscribe ourselves. True, next-generation consoles are making a huge impact in the gaming world, and rightly so. Microsoft's X-Box is looking like the best bet for world domination, but don't forget, this is because it's basically a PC in disguise.

Peter Molyneux isn't deserting the PC forever. He's actually launching on console and porting over to the PC. Unfortunately, this is where the big bucks are. This is the same as the *Halo* situation. Bungie was developing for the PC, but money has forced them to launch on X-Box and then

follow on the PC later.

If you want proof of the PCs dominance, though, just look at the mod scene. Online games are going to go through the roof soon, and we know for sure that console boys and girls aren't going to be enjoying anything quite as deep or involving as *Counter-Strike* for a long time to come.

BACK TO FRONT

Mr Anderson, call me picky if you like, but I was just wondering why the hell PC magazines stick their free CD on the front? Why not be unusual and stick it on to the back of the mag for once? It just really annoys me.

John Mace

That's like asking cars to stick their headlights on the back so they don't dazzle you when you're walking down the street. Anyway, if it irks you so much, you could always switch the CD around yourself.

PACE OFF

I was reading through the October issue of your great mag only to find myself in a rage when I had finished reading the last letter in Mailbox. I believe the words that went through my head after reading these appalling views are unprintable.

Alan Pace basically said that the staff at *PC ZONE* have no idea how to make a computer game themselves and, therefore, have no right to say that *Daikatana* is only fit for the bin. Why does he even bother to buy a games magazine if he expects every review to praise the game? Isn't the reason most people buy this magazine to make sure they can avoid buying rubbish like this?

It may be true that they couldn't put a half-decent game together, although given the time that John Romero took to do *Daikatana*, they probably could. This, however, is beside the point because he is a game developer who gets money to produce these games and people expect it to be good if they are going to pay a fortune for it. You only have to take a glance over the *PC ZONE* Top 100 to see the brilliant games on offer elsewhere.

On a lighter note, I have just got into online gaming and it is the absolute business. Anyone out there who hasn't experienced it is really missing out. The only downside is that it costs a fortune if you play it regularly, so could you please recommend some ISPs that give free, unmetered access so I can play *Team Fortress Classic* and *Counter-Strike* non-stop? And would it be possible to use these with the Wireplay servers?

Byron Buck

We reckon that Alan Pace is actually John Romero in disguise. It's the only reasonable explanation. There are a number of ISPs offering 24/7 unmetered access, but most involve a monthly charge, so it's not entirely free. AOL is already offering a scheme and long-trusted outfits such as Demon and Virgin should have something to offer by the time you read this. See www.net4now.com/unmetered for more information.



A little late-night excitement in the Arab Streets of *Counter-Strike*.



Do not approach this man.

MODS ROCK

I'm not going tell you how good your mag is and how I sleep with every issue just to be as close to the latest games news as I can. Instead, I want to ask you if the Top 100 can be renamed the Top 100+10, so that you can include mods such as *Counter-Strike*.

Now that I've discovered *Counter-Strike*, I have no need for other games, but it would be good to see how it stands in the grand scheme of things.

Dave Toulson

We couldn't agree more about *Counter-Strike* and, with a bit of magical jiggery pokery, we've introduced a brand new mods section into our Top 100. So turn to page 150 and revel in our generosity.

ONE ANGRY OGRE

I'd just like to say how bitterly disappointed at the so-called review of *EverQuest* in issue 95. Why on earth do you send a reviewer who has never played a RPG to do an online review of a RPG game? Frankly, the whole concept amazes me. You'll probably reply with "well, we wanted to see what the average gamer who hasn't played a RPG game would think of it", and that is fine, but at least pick a reviewer who is remotely interested in that type of game.

If not, you end up with the three pages of drivel that I read in your recent edition. Did this guy even spend more than an hour on it? I doubt it. He complains about it crashing all the time, and yet mine hasn't crashed at all.

Not once in the pages I read did I see anything informative about *EverQuest*. Surely, as a games reviewer, theses are the first things he should have considered. Yet his article turned out to be a complete piss take out of not only the game, but also the people who are playing it. All in all, I'm sure you have had many letters like this one from angry fans of online RPGs in general. I'm really annoyed.

Paul Begg

Actually, we've only received two letters of complaint, yours and a very similar rant from Flintanvil Steelhart, a level 31 Dwarven Cleric. Steve Hill Does *EverQuest* wasn't a review of the game, just a bit of fun. We reviewed the game in issue 92 and awarded it a Classic rating, which it's still holding in the Top 100. If you've calmed down, you might want to check out our second instalment of Steve Hill doing *EverQuest* on p122. If it makes you queasy, just keep repeating to yourself: "This is not a review".

LETTER OF THE MONTH

GOODIES WINNER!

FLIGHT OF FANCY

In the October 2000 edition of your mag, you printed a letter by a Mr Kaye regarding the fate of PC flight simulators and the current state of this genre. It instantly sent me into a miffed mode. The focus of his argument seemed to be that flight sims and hardcore sims don't particularly appeal to enough gamers to warrant the continuation of sims in general. He also states that the pursuit of realism has ended with the latest crop of flight sims and now has no direction. Flight sims are dead, long live the shooters.

So where to begin? Well, the flight-sim genre has always attracted and, for the most part, been aimed at the more mature and perhaps more 'intelligent' gamers. The whole point of a simulation is that it should recreate an experience as accurately as possible, hence 'accurate physics models and detailed manuals'. It goes without saying that if you want a real musical masterpiece, you're not going to run out and buy the latest Steps album. It's the same with sims. As to the death of sims, I would say it's a mute point, judging by the flood of products currently on the market – and *Il-2 Sturmovich, Typhoon, Battle of Britain, B17-II* and Microsoft's *CFS2* are all about to be released within the next year. "Not dead, just a little peaky," you claim. Oh come on, *PC ZONE*, what happened to objective journalism?

OK, flight sims attract a smaller audience and a few bad apples such as *Gunship!* don't do anything to improve mass appeal, but there will always be plenty of people willing to support the genre and not condemn it when things get a little shaky.

Angry Sims Fan

Objective journalism? Check out the front cover of this very magazine. Paul Presley hasn't looked as happy since he managed to land a chartered flight from London to Manchester five minutes early.



Flight sims are not dead, just lying a little low.

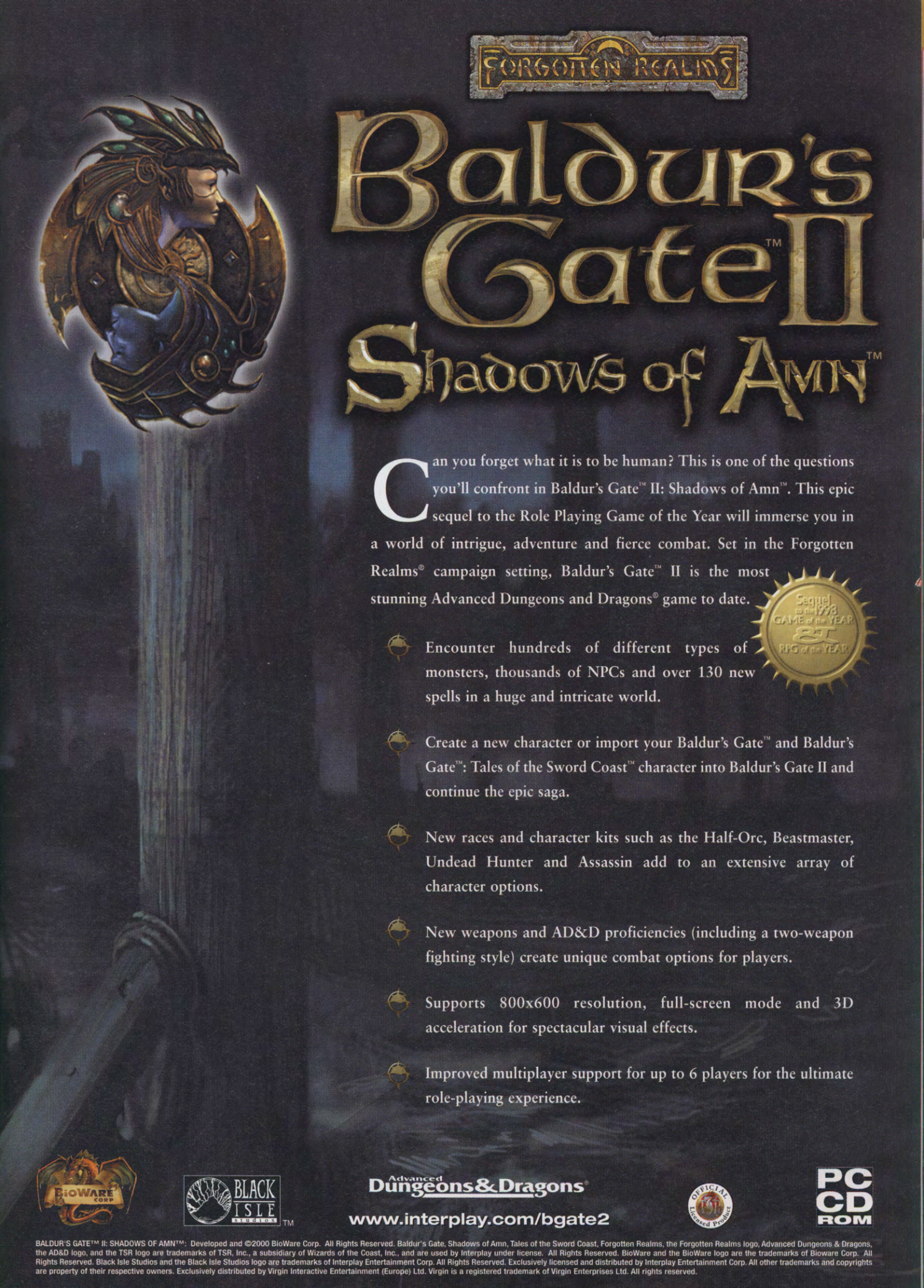
Along the line between good and evil,
a loyal friend is a welcome ally.







PRIMA
STRATEGY GUIDE
AVAILABLE


FORGOTTEN REALMS
Baldur's Gate™ II
Shadows of Amn™
Can you forget what it is to be human? This is one of the questions you'll confront in Baldur's Gate™ II: Shadows of Amn™. This epic sequel to the Role Playing Game of the Year will immerse you in a world of intrigue, adventure and fierce combat. Set in the Forgotten Realms® campaign setting, Baldur's Gate™ II is the most stunning Advanced Dungeons and Dragons® game to date.
Sequel to the 1998 GAME of the YEAR & RPG of the YEAR
Encounter hundreds of different types of monsters, thousands of NPCs and over 130 new spells in a huge and intricate world.
Create a new character or import your Baldur's Gate™ and Baldur's Gate™: Tales of the Sword Coast™ character into Baldur's Gate II and continue the epic saga.
New races and character kits such as the Half-Orc, Beastmaster, Undead Hunter and Assassin add to an extensive array of character options.
New weapons and AD&D proficiencies (including a two-weapon fighting style) create unique combat options for players.
Supports 800x600 resolution, full-screen mode and 3D acceleration for spectacular visual effects.
Improved multiplayer support for up to 6 players for the ultimate role-playing experience.
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Black Isle Studios™
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A cut above...

SEVERANCE: BLADE OF DARKNESS

The latest PC horror/shocker to earn a big red 18 certificate derives from unusual sources. *Keith Pullin* checks out the full gory details...

THE DETAILS

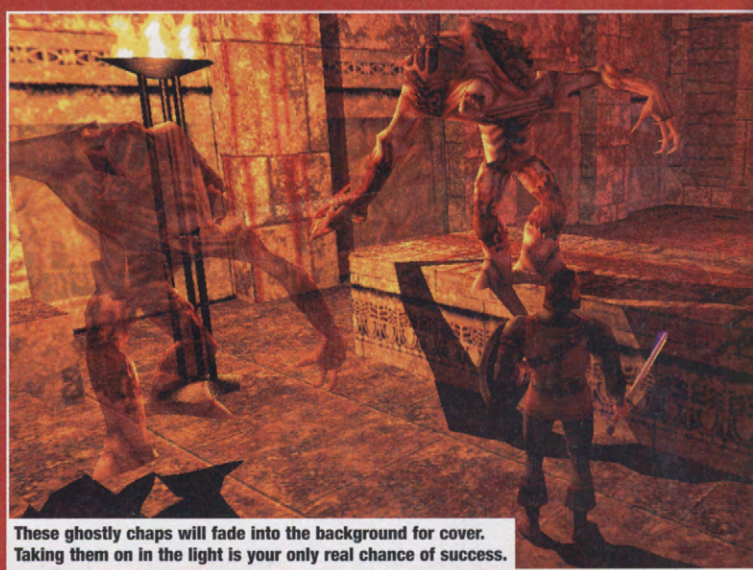
DEVELOPER Rebel Act Studios
PUBLISHER Codemasters
WEBSITE www.rebelact.net/severance/index.shtml
OUT December 2000

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Ultra gory
- 100 different weapons
- Brilliant use of light and shadow
- Choose from four characters
- Superb combat

Name a game in which you can chop off someone's arm and senselessly beat them into submission with it. Doesn't happen does it? Well, all that's about to change. *Severance: Blade Of Darkness* looks set to rekindle the gaming violence debate in glorious 'rivers of blood' style. Codemasters has accepted the fact this gore-fest will carry an 18 certificate and, although the Warwickshire based publisher is more renowned for its family values (*Micro Machines*, *TOCA*, *Colin McRae*), it is more than content to go along with the BBFC's adult entertainment ruling. After all, violence creates publicity in the knife-edge world of computer entertainment, and where there's publicity (good or bad), there are sales.

Interestingly, the media-friendly Codemasters is also keen to shake its image as the softly, softly publisher and, with annual profits soaring to more than £70 million, it seems that the time is ripe for one of the industry's oldest publishers to risk incurring the wrath of the *Daily Mail* and its tireless anti-violence crusade.



These ghostly chaps will fade into the background for cover. Taking them on in the light is your only real chance of success.

CV

rebel act

REBEL ACT

Talk about slow going; Spanish developer Rebel Act has been steadily working on this title for five years now. Still, when it's your first game, you've got to make sure everything's perfect, right?





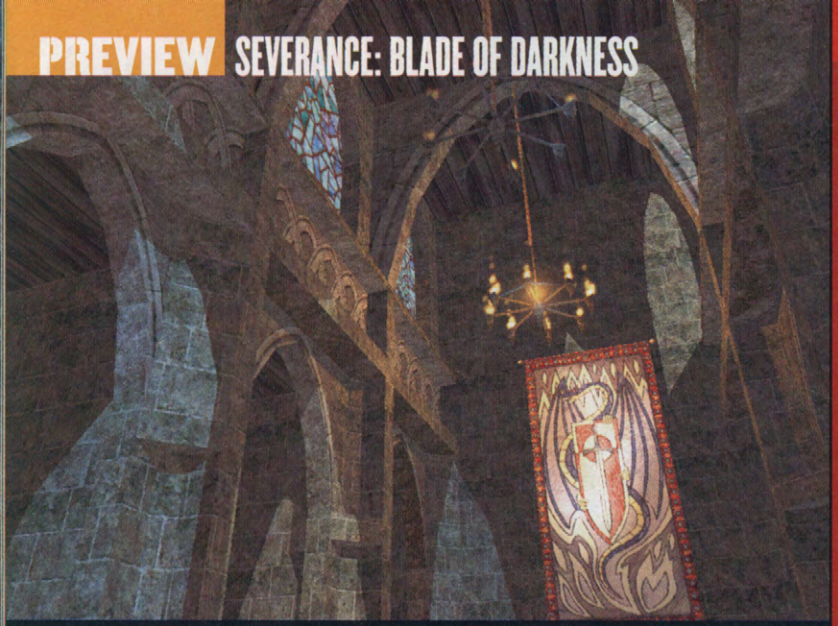
Q&A

JOSE LUIS VAELLO

A designer and art director from the Spanish developers Rebel Act Studios, who have been working on Severance: Blade Of Darkness for five years now.

PCZ What was the first game you ever played?
JOSE The first was *The Maze Of Galius* for Msx
PCZ And what is the best game you've ever played?
JOSE *Severance* is the best game I have ever played (of course), but I'm also really impressed with *Metal Gear Solid*.
PCZ What was the most recent game you bought?
JOSE Last time I was in the shops I bought three games: *Diablo II*, *Vampire* and *Homeworld*.
PCZ What's the most violent game you've ever played?
JOSE From my point of view, the most violent game that I have ever played was *Carmageddon*.
PCZ Do you think it is responsible to feature explicit violence in computer games?
JOSE Violence is in the world, in games and in real life. In this case you can choose whether or not to buy a violent game – you know what you're going to be getting. Unfortunately, you are not able to choose in real life.
PCZ Would you describe *Severance* as excessively violent?
JOSE No! *Severance* is not excessively violent. We just wanted it to be as realistic as possible within a fantasy world.
PCZ Why has *Severance* taken so long in development?
JOSE *Severance* is a very ambitious project for which we developed our own technology and built a new team from scratch – that takes time.
PCZ Have you ever been involved in a fight before?
JOSE NO!
PCZ We believe you.

"There are an almost infinite variety of attacks, defences and combination moves. Mastering them should be the major lasting appeal of the game"



Not quite the smooth curves of the *Quake III* engine, but getting there...



The blood effects are definitely some of the most realistic we've seen.



Skeletons don't bleed, so unfortunately that must be your blood on the floor.

BLOOD & BONES

But if you're thinking that all this blood and hype is probably just a cynical attempt to boost sales and cover costs for what has been a stellar five-year development period, you might be surprised.

Severance is more than just a bloody mess; the bones of the game are very much in place. Spanish developer Rebel Act Studios has created a phenomenal engine (well, they've had long enough to do it) boasting realistic looking mutilation, convincing physics and some of the best lighting we have ever had the pleasure to witness.

During one part of the game the player walks into a room adorned with flickering torches to discover there's an enormous hellish shadow on the alcove wall. As you slowly edge around the corner to face what must be Satan himself, you discover the truth; the shadow is owned by a diminutive runt who's taken advantage of the illusionary effect of the torches to leave you needing a clean pair of pants. Effects like this are used with great aplomb to create a formidable atmosphere from start to finish. Surprisingly, one area where the aesthetics do, in fact, look slightly under the weather is the predictable reflecting water; there's simply not enough random movement there to fool the eyes into thinking it's anything close to realistic. Still, with any luck, that'll be high up the pecking order on the developer's tweak list.

Curiously, the gameplay will have more in common with arcade fighting games like *Mortal Kombat* and *Streetfighter 2*. Your nifty array of combatants can knock out two or even three-hit combination moves, which is a lot more intricate than your usual third-person adventure. Instead of simply charging up to a foe and mindlessly flailing, you actually have to think carefully about what would be the best move in that particular situation. Should you go for a low leg sweep, or possibly a powerful arcing headshot to dispose of your tormenter quickly? There are an almost infinite variety of attacks, defences and combination moves on offer. Mastering those should prove to be one of the major lasting appeals of the game.

Yet *Severance* is an action/adventure through and through, make no mistake about that. The story is the clichéd fantasy formula of four adventurers (Knight, Barbarian, Amazon and Dwarf) who set off on a perilous quest of good against evil. The player



On the later levels, many of the monsters will use weapons as well as any other natural assets they might have.



Torches can be picked up and used in most dark places. You can even set fire to objects if you like. However, the engine won't allow you to burn living things, sadly.



Higher level monsters tend to use their intelligence much more than their lower level cousins.

chooses which character to play as, and then attempts to hack their way through 17 levels of flaming skeleton warriors, pig-ugly orcs, golems, zombies, and – of course – enormous end-of-stage bosses. In total there are more than 30 kinds of monster in the game with various degrees of intelligence assigned to each.

On some of the later levels, the fights are immense. Battles take on epic proportions as neither player nor computer manages to get the upper hand. Metal hits metal and sparks fly as you slowly gain ground and then lose it again. If your opponent's weapon does breach your defences, a wound will appear at exactly the spot where you were hit. Likewise wounds appear on your foes; you can even lop off arms or legs to leave your hapless victim thrashing on the floor before dying from loss of blood. Don't think you will be immune from the same kind of treatment though. The enemies in *Severance* will be capable of taking off your head with soul-destroying ease. During development, our psychopathically inclined Spanish friends even toyed with the idea of allowing monsters to carve off your limbs so that you can crawl and flop about on the floor howling in agony. They eventually dismissed the idea after discovering that it messed up the balance of the game.

"There's no green blood here. This is gushing, oozing and spurting red stuff, as far as the eye can see. Dismembered bodies litter the floor like autumn leaves"



The AI seems to be finely tuned with a fair amount of organisation

OUR WARRIORS FROM AFAR

Just so that you're completely sure about this, here are the four stars of the show



AMAZON

These wild women specialise in doing serious damage with big sticks. They also like throwing things and, when all else fails, they can happily revert to the bow and arrow. They possess good stamina and do not tire easily.



DWARF

The Dwarves' hard but peaceful way of life has made them a no-nonsense, yet friendly race. They are strong for their size and fancy their chances against anyone providing they have an axe handy. Dwarves tire quickly though; so pick your spot carefully.



KNIGHT

Champions of Justice, Knights are powerful in defence and attack. They prefer to wield a sword in one hand and a shield in the other. They have great stamina and speed. Should they need to regain strength they won't find it difficult to find refuge.



BARBARIAN

These nomadic tribesmen are feared warriors. When it comes to weaponry they prefer two-handed swords (the bigger the better). Their stamina is good – although they are not as quick across the ground as Knights or Amazons.



Is that an overgrown fingernail, or are you just pleased to see me?



Whenever you come across a group of monsters, check the information at the top right of the screen to check their level and what items they are carrying.

amidst the enemy ranks. A few of the sneakier denizens plan their attacks in groups of three or four in an attempt to overwhelm and confuse you. Other monsters are sneakier still; Liches will operate in units of four and vomit a lethal poison into your face when close enough. Some monster groups will even have leaders, if you can take them out first, your chances of survival will be greatly increased.

During early skirmishes, monsters aren't so bright; you'll find it easy to carve your way through the hordes, with arms, legs and heads soaring through the air in all directions. It's quite clear that Rebel Act has decided that under no circumstances should they compromise their 'art'. There's no green blood here. This is gushing, oozing and spurting red stuff. There are fountains of blood as far as the eye can see and dismembered bodies litter the floor like autumn leaves. If you kill somebody on some steps or stairs, the blood trickles down and forms a nice little pool at the bottom. Alternatively, you can watch in disgust as recently detached heads bounce off walls and roll onto the floor leaving distinctive crimson trails in their wake. If Rebel Act hasn't considered developing *Advanced Abattoir Simulator* for Codemasters it certainly should do.

HEADS WILL ROLE

So have we really got an action/adventure with as much gameplay as gore? Mike Hayes, Codemasters' marketing director certainly thinks so: "While the cleverly done gory combat sequences will attract everyone's attention to *Severance*, it is the immersive role-playing adventure and intricately detailed graphics that will win the game its followers," he coos in that distinctive marketing language.

To a certain extent his claim is true (characters can level-up and learn more powerful attacking moves), but don't expect the role-playing intricacy of *Deus Ex*, *Vampire*, or *System Shock 2*.

Still, with around 100 weapons lying around waiting to be used, players are encouraged to find a weapon they like, practice with it and ultimately attempt to master all the moves that particular item has to offer. It's also worth bearing in mind that most of the higher-level weapons have at least one unique special move associated with them. So, if slicing creatures in half horizontally with a sword is getting kind of boring for you, you can always look out for a large axe and attempt to decapitate two orcs with one swing. The novel variety of ways in which to rearrange your enemies is enough to make your local butcher squeal.

You'll even find that some characters are more adept at using certain items than others. The Amazon, for example, is not really up for staggering down a dimly lit corridor dragging a sword the size of a horse behind her. The 7ft tall Barbarian on the other hand would fare better. Then there's the Dwarf; he's so good with an axe he could shave with it – if he wanted. It's a case of finding a combination of character and weapon type that you are most happy with.

Beware though, characters tend to tire quickly. Once again it depends on the character as to how quickly they weaken, but when they

WARGAMES

Violence in games, and objections to it, is nothing new. Peruse this history and see where it all began

Contrary to tabloid belief, not everyone who plays *Duke Nukem 3D*, *Doom* or *Quake* waltzes into school with a semi-automatic rifle and guns down their classmates or work colleagues. The media's assault on violent video games is often sensationalist and poorly researched. Nevertheless, it's an approach that's remained constant for more than 15 years.

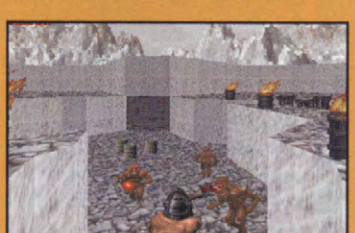
In 1985, *Barbarian* on the Spectrum caused outrage with its graphic decapitation scenes during the game and racy artwork featuring '80s page three darling Maria Whittaker on the box. One ZX Spectrum magazine was even consigned to the top shelf by many panicking newsagents after the mamtastic Ms Whittaker adorned the cover.

Come the early '90s and Acclaim felt the warmth of the press over its gruesome beat 'em up *Mortal Kombat*. Featuring 'fatalities' as special moves, the game included such dubious occurrences as spines and beating hearts being ripped from live bodies. That didn't seem to do the game's worldwide popularity any harm though, and has since gone on to spawn films and a television series.

On the PC, there have been almost too many games to mention. *Postal* certainly caused a bit of a fuss with its plot; the idea of a postman going berserk and gunning down every man, woman and child in sight was condemned by virtually everyone on the planet as being downright sick – and



***Mortal Combat*: a lesson in how to make friends and influence people.**



***Doom*: credited as the game that triggered the decline in social values...**



***Duke Nukem 3D*: could this game really inspire high school shooting sprees?**



After playing *Carmageddon* you won't be able to resist running someone over.



You can use the weapon of any enemy you come across, providing you kill them first, of course.



The reflective water as it stands at the moment. As you can see, it's not bad, but there's room for improvement still.

do, you will need to make sure there are no nearby enemies to threaten your hero while he rests.

There's also a small puzzle element to the game; nothing too taxing mind, that would ruin the flow. The average brainteaser might consist of a doorway blocked by boxes that must be burnt in order for you to pass through. Oh yes, keys, buttons and levers also make an appearance – well, it wouldn't be a third-person adventure without them.

At the moment, the level design is still something that both Codemasters and Rebel Act are working on very closely. In fact, a lot of work is going into one of the Amazon-only levels to ensure there are distinctive landmarks the player can easily identify. Hopefully, with this kind of attitude from the developers, we can expect the castle, temple, dungeons, catacombs and *Severance*'s numerous other locations to be the kind of places where we won't actually mind getting lost.

RISKY BUSINESS

One of the more conventional areas of debate that could divert argument away from the filth and slaughter is the interface and control method. Firstly, this action/adventure will not feature any somersaulting, tightrope-walking or daredevil manoeuvres of that ilk. That's Lara territory and Rebel Act doesn't want to go there. *Severance* territory is strictly running, jumping, ducking and diving with plenty of swinging balls of fire.

The control method, therefore, is a relatively straightforward affair. Players use the mouse to look around and attack, and the cursor keys to walk. Double-tap the forward key and you run. There's also a targeting system, as seen in *Legend Of Zelda*. Using this, you can select an enemy and remain facing them regardless of where you move. You can also defend yourself with your shield for when you need protection.

Apart from the occasional fireball-shooting sword, arrows, throwing knives and chucking body parts around, *Severance* is about getting up close and personal. As far as Rebel Act and Codemasters are concerned, you've got to get into the thick of it and have a bloody good time. If you're looking for wizards and spells, you can forget it.

Jonathan Smith is a game designer at Codemasters who is working closely with the Spanish contingent. He explains why they wanted to stay away from the magic pixie thing: "We wanted to focus on combat. This is a visceral, kicking you in the face, chopping your head off, slicing your arms off, punchy fighting game. Magic users stand at the back of the room and wave their hands a bit."

BLOODY WEB

So there you have it. Kicking, chopping and slicing. That's *Severance* in a nutshell. But that's not quite the end of the story. There's a multiplayer version too. Modem or Network players can enter into an online arena where they challenge other players in one-on-one combat. Players will not actually be able to use their single-player characters however. Instead, there will be a separate online-only system that will probably involve players moving up a ranking system, gaining new moves as they progress. It's a simple concept that's not trying to infringe on anyone's online territory, especially *Diablo 2*. As an added bonus for what is really a single-player adventure, it's a worthy addition.

It remains to be seen whether Codemasters will eventually be ordered to tone down the violence when the BBFC get to play a finished version, but if the worst comes to the worst, it looks like *Severance* will be able to stand on its own two feet anyway. Find out for sure next month when, after five long years, *Severance* is served. PCZ

"We wanted to focus on combat. This is a kicking you in the face, chopping your arms off, really punchy game"

JONATHAN SMITH, GAME DESIGNER AT CODEMASTERS



You wouldn't, would you?

rightly so. *Doom* is instantly notorious as the game that inspires people to go on shooting sprees, as is *Duke Nukem 3D*, *Quake* and *Kingpin*.

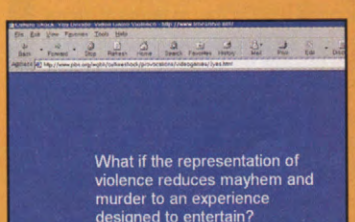
Driving games also manage to secure their own notoriety. Both *Carmageddon* and *Grand Theft Auto* received negative attention from the press but, again, neither game suffered. In fact, they, like virtually every other game that's attained a high profile due to bad publicity, went on to be smash hits.

As long as tabloid newspapers and sensationalist websites remain oblivious to the fact that their knee-jerk criticism and articles have exactly the opposite effect to what they intended, developers and publishers will keep laughing all the way to the bank.

Violence in games is here to stay – at least for now...



***GTA*: does seeing this make you want to go out and steal a car?**



It's sensationalist websites like these that cause hysteria in the press.

Don't shoot shoot that thing at me...

PROJECT IGI

Think *GoldenEye*, *Metal Gear Solid* and *Hidden & Dangerous*. *Dave Woods* is going in again

UPDATE

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Innerloop Studio
PUBLISHER Eidos
WEBSITE www.project-i-g-i.com
OUT November

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Single-player stealth
- Huge levels and realistic landscapes
- Almost unlimited zoom capabilities
- Real-life weapons

Stealth is the new brown. *Counter-Strike* is in, *Quake* is out. If you're not down with that, then you're not keeping up with the times. It took me a long time to convert from games such as *UT* and *Quake III*, and I'm still more than happy to go back and have a 15-minute brainless blast, but both feel a mite hollow after games with consequences.

And *Project IGI*, the imminent new thinker-shooter from Innerloop, has consequences aplenty. A single-player, mission-driven game, *IGI* puts you in the boots of Jones, a classically British spy who has decided to take the devil's dollar and take on a covert extraction mission in Estonia for the United States. They want to talk to an arm's dealer and you've got to bring him back in one piece. The problem? They've tracked his mobile phone to a military airfield and said airfield is obviously subject to some pretty hefty protection. Think electric fences and minefields. Think helicopter gunships and APCs. Think, oh shit, do I really have to go?

"One shot isn't going to kill you and, although a few head shots are going to hurt, it's possible to take a fair bit of damage and still live for your next vodka martini"



Aside from this all-action opening, Innerloop is keen to keep the convoluted plot away from your grubby hands for the time being, and although we've played the latest preview build, we're not going to spoil the surprises for you now. Although you can expect biological and nuclear weapons to make an appearance. Rest assured, though, the action doesn't start and end in Estonia, and if you liked the twists in *Deus Ex*, there should be enough between the two to keep you in conspiracy theories for the next couple of years.

KENDALL MINT CAKE

The latest build is looking very promising, and though there are still some obvious tweaks to be made in terms of AI, the auditory and visual senses of the guards seems to be pretty much in place. There's no one way to complete each mission, in fact the levels are so big that you could end up playing through a lot of them completely differently for the rest of your life. Look at the scenery in the backdrops of the some of the screenshots. Apparently, and we haven't had time to test this out yet, everything you see is in-engine. You can even climb the mountains if you've got a ready supply of Kendall Mint Cake to hand.

To cope with the huge levels, *IGI* comes with two essential features. One is the hugely impressive zoom capabilities. This means you can get yourself on a decent vantage point, whip out your binoculars and check everything out in fine detail before cocking it up and getting slaughtered. You've also got access to some pretty nifty satellite communications that can show you where security cameras are, what their line of sight is and how you should proceed without being seen.

If you don't check your satellite pictures, you can also hear when you walk into the line of sight of security cameras. A series of beeps lets you know that you ought to back off, but if you're pretty sure that there aren't any guards around, then you can take the camera out with a few accurate bullets. Remember, though, this is realistic stuff. We tried it a couple of times and started getting bothered by some bod in a security tower about 50 metres away.

NOT SEEN, NOT HEARD

So the bottom line in *IGI* is to attempt not to be seen. You might have access to some pretty hefty weaponry (modelled on real-life counterparts like the AK-47 and the Saw 80, and tested by the entire development team, including the animator, in order to make the experience as authentic as possible), but the aim of the game is to think your way in. If things go belly up, you've got to shoot your way out.

Although realism is the key, the game makes certain concessions to ensure that you're not frustrated by the fact that it wouldn't actually be possible to take out a whole camp of trained soldiers on your own in real life. One shot isn't going to kill you and, although a few head shots are going to hurt, it's possible to take a fair bit of damage and still live for your next vodka martini. Also, the game occasionally switches to third-person to give you a better view of what's coming up. If you're walking up a ladder in first-person, you obviously wouldn't be able to see anyone patrolling the top of the building until you get there. *IGI* pulls back so you can see what you're getting into.

Other actions are classed as time-based actions, such as hacking a security system or climbing a fence. During these you won't actually have control of Jones, but you're still as susceptible to a couple of bullets in the head. A bar shows you how long you're going to have to stay still until the action's completed.

One big disappointment is that *IGI* is not going to sport multiplayer in its first release. It is going to be available in the future, either as a freely downloadable patch, or as part of an add-on mission pack. The reason given is that *IGI* is primarily a single-player experience. To add multiplayer support would have pushed the release back past the crucial Christmas period. It's a shame, but we still think there's more than enough in the single-player game to warrant a very close look at our review next issue. PCZ

CV

INNERLOOP

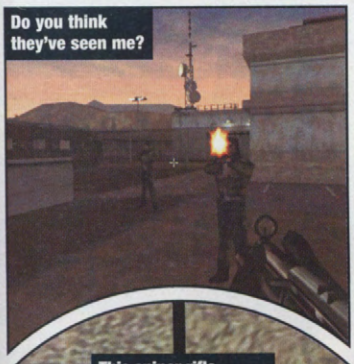
INNERLOOP STUDIO

Just the one game on the cards before *IGI*. It's a flight sim and it's where the brand new engine originated from.

1998 *Joint Strike Fighter.* Excellent looking flight sim that suffered from a few gameplay flaws.



All the cut-scenes are in-engine to keep up the feeling of immersion.



Do you think they've seen me?



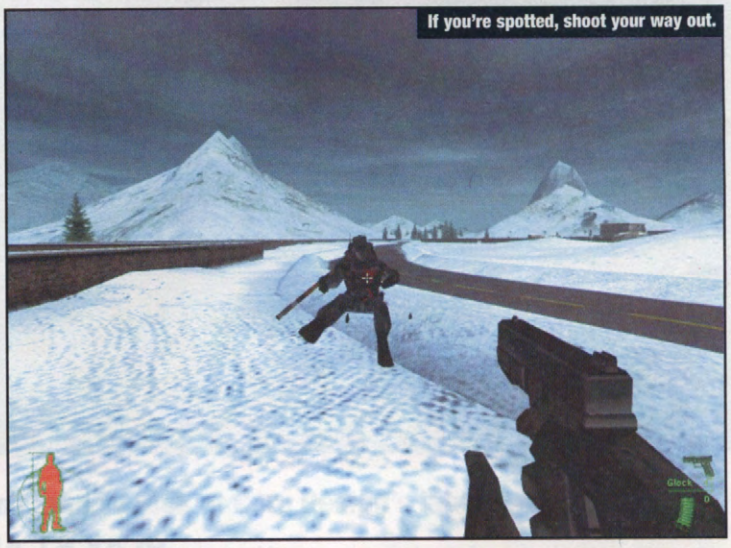
This sniper rifle. Everyone's favourite.



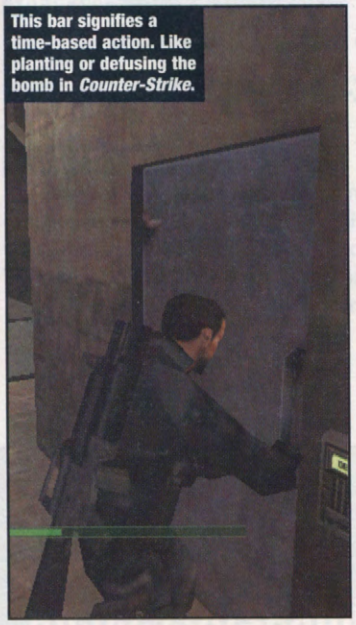
Look what you can do with a peashooter.



You don't actually get to pilot vehicles, but you can use mounted guns and the like.



If you're spotted, shoot your way out.



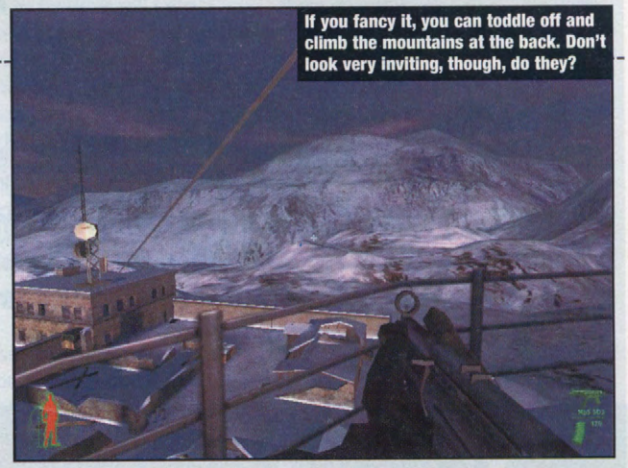
This bar signifies a time-based action. Like planting or defusing the bomb in *Counter-Strike*.

UNDER THE BONNET

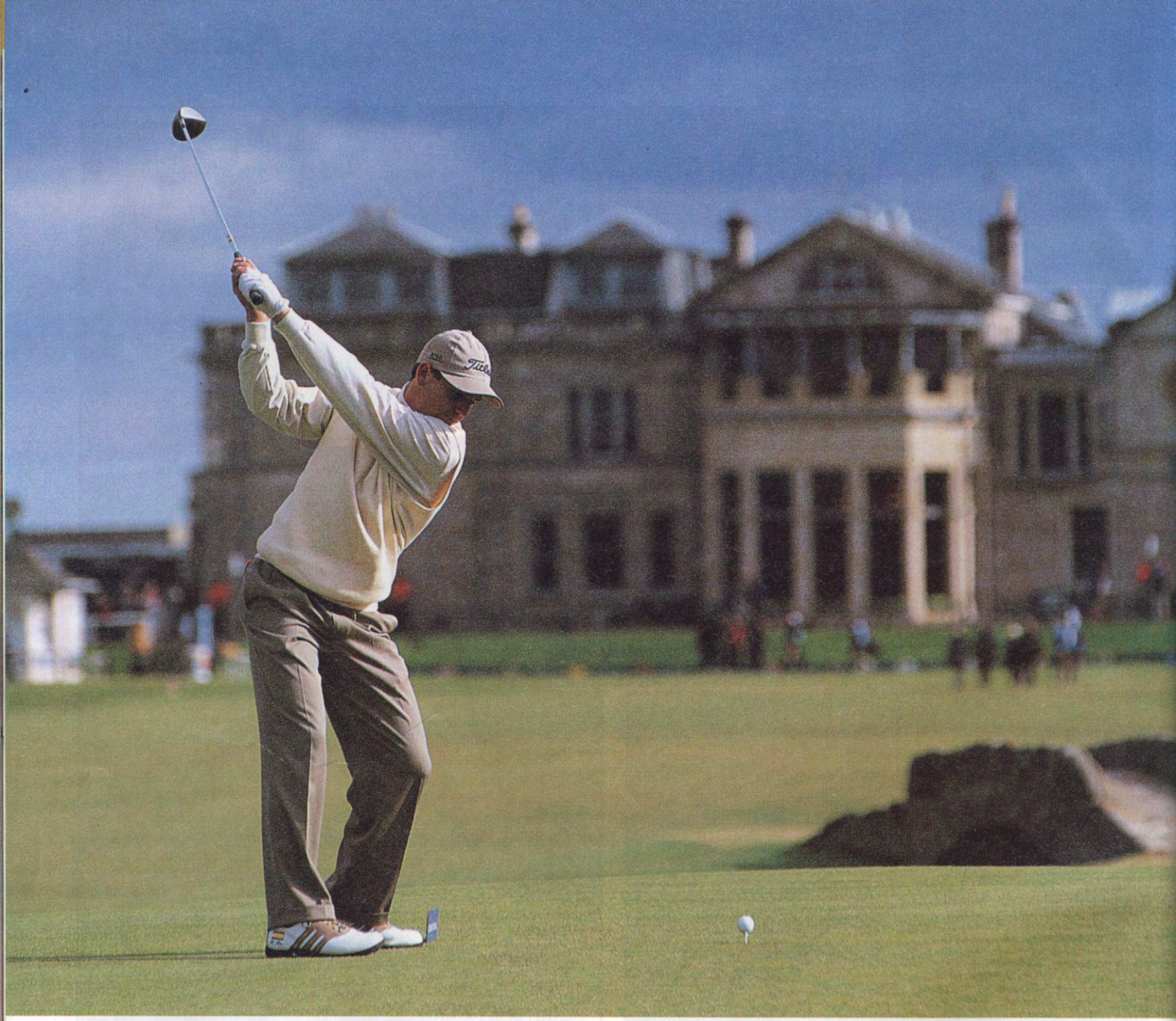
If there's one single feature that makes *IGI* stand out, it's the huge levels. Where do they come from?

Everything you see in *IGI* is rendered in-engine and you can literally go wherever you like. Apparently, the size of the landscapes in the game is equal to one million km squared and you can climb the mountains you see in the background, although we haven't verified this yet.

The engine behind this feat is Terraform, and the landscape portion is a full rewrite of the IFS engine used in Innerloop's previous game, *Joint Strike Fighter*. It works by using building blocks repeatedly across the landscape and applying different scale and orientation. There's also a portal system that enables *IGI* to include detailed interior sections as well. These are only rendered once you move inside to maximise frame rates, although it also renders visible sections that you can see through windows and holes in the wall. Gosh, how clever.



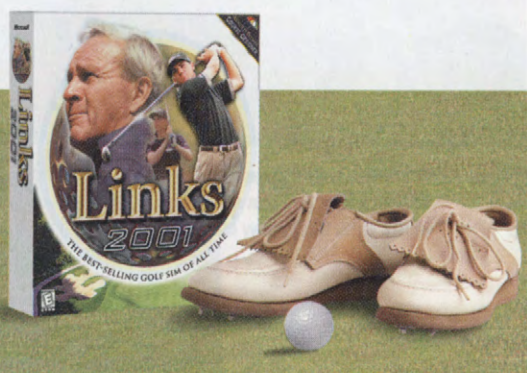
If you fancy it, you can toddle off and climb the mountains at the back. Don't look very inviting, though, do they?



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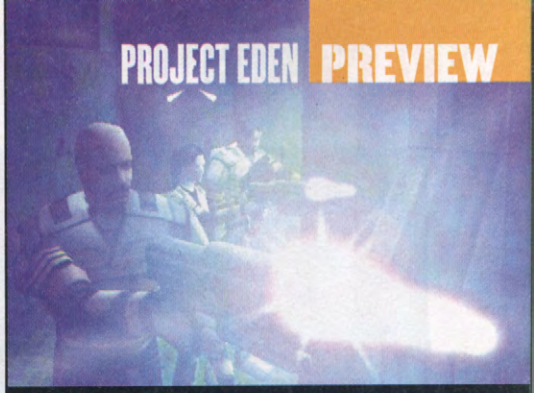
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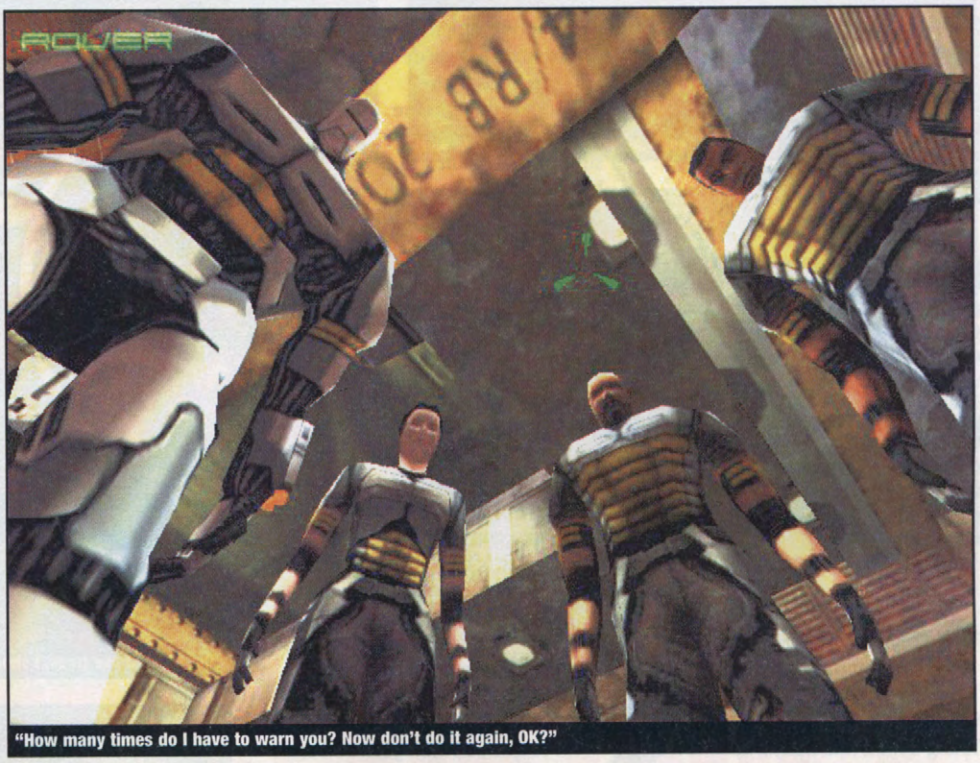
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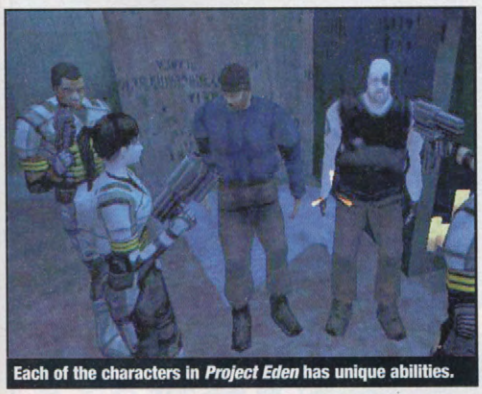

"Hands up if you need the toilet before we go."


The group can split up, in order to solve certain puzzles.


"Anyone got a light?"


Nothing unsavoury going on here by the look of things.


"How many times do I have to warn you? Now don't do it again, OK?"


Each of the characters in *Project Eden* has unique abilities.

PROJECT EDEN

In the beginning there was *Tomb Raider*. Now *Martin Korda* takes a look at Core Design's latest creation

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Core Design
PUBLISHER Eidos
WEBSITE www.eidos.com
OUT March 2001

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- First- and third-person shooter in one
- Four-player co-operative gameplay
- Each character in team has unique abilities
- Designed by the same team that created *Tomb Raider*

FIRST ENCOUNTER

When we first heard about *Project Eden*, we thought it was going to be a nature simulation. But from what we've seen of it so far, we couldn't have been more wrong. Designed by the team that brought us *Tomb Raider*, *Project Eden* will be set in the future, when massive over-population causes major social divides. With the slums increasingly rife with crime, the government decides to set up the Urban Protection Agency to try and keep the peace.

One of the things that excites us most about *Project Eden*, is that it's going to be both a first- and third-person shooter. By this we mean that, depending on your preference, you can choose which view you wish to play from. So whether you're an *Unreal Tournament* or *MDK2* lover, you'll be more than catered for here.

You'll control a team of four well-armed and highly skilled UPS agents, each with their own special skill, ranging from computer hacking to demolitions. As with *Star Trek Voyager: Elite Force*, you'll only control one character at a time, while the computer looks after the rest of your unit. However, you'll be able to hop from one member to the next, which will be particularly important in missions where your team has to split up to solve certain puzzles. Also, if you've got access to a LAN, then you and three of your friends will be able to control one character each and play co-operatively.

"Core may have another hit with *Project Eden*. While it's unlikely to have the impact *Tomb Raider* had on the world, it's still sure to turn heads upon its arrival"

Core also deserves a huge round of applause for potentially solving the problem that so many third-person shooters suffer from. Instead of having to always face your enemies during gun fights, you'll be able to run away and shoot over your shoulder at the same time. This is made possible by a mouse controlled aiming circle, which you direct independently from your keyboard-operated character. We've seen it work first hand, and it looks like it's going to be a pretty easy and effective control system to use.

Project Eden is still some way off, but going by what we've seen so far, Core may well have another big fat hit on its hands. While it's unlikely to have the impact *Tomb Raider* had on the gaming world, it's still sure to turn plenty of heads upon its arrival. We'll keep you posted. PZ

TROPICO

Vote for me or I'll eat your children. *Dave Woods*, man of the people, tries hard to be a benevolent leader

FIRST ENCOUNTER

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Gathering Of Developers
PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive
OUT March 2001
WEBSITE www.godgames.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- *SimCity* meets South America
- From the makers of *Railroad Tycoon II*
- Modified *Railroad Tycoon II* engine
- Bad guys have all the fun



Watch out for the greedy fat bankers. In fact, kill them.




"Cut down those trees, I shoot you in the face."

The problem I've got with most sim-type games is that they're as straight as William Hague in his Young Conservative days. In the past few months, I've watched people struggling to enjoy *Traffic Giant* (sort out your local fag-end town's transport system) and *Airport Inc* (run a successful airport). Snooze. What happened to causing a bit of mischief?

Salvation could be close at hand. At the recent ECTS show, I was impressed by a relatively unknown title called *Tropico*, which is being built around a modified version of the *Railroad Tycoon II* engine. Styled as a *SimCity* in South America, it enables you to rule over your own tropical island in the way that you see fit.

Sadly, our favourite staples of the Banana Republic, namely growing huge swathes of poppies or dense furlongs of marijuana fields aren't going to feature in the game. For some reason the developers thought the mass market might shun such deviant behaviour. *Huh?* And terrorism per se isn't going to play a major part. PopTop says it might happen as an in-game event, but not as an organisational activity. Shame.

Still, as a dictator you should be able to find enough anti-social constraints to occupy your stay in paradise. One of our favourites is the capacity to declare free elections, lose and then refuse to leave power. How the generals laughed...

The key to success is how the locals (let's call them Tropicans) view you. You can't interact with them directly, but the way you mould the island affects your population and its stability. Build a hospital and a doctor will arrive, and so on. Run your island into the ground and you'd better be on good terms with the army. Of course you don't have to be a bad man. If you want you can try to steer your colony away from the stigma of poverty, and into a new reign of collective prosperity.



Bada Bing!

> **"As a dictator, you should be able to find enough anti-social constraints to occupy your stay in paradise, and to run your island into the ground"**

The choice, as they say, is yours – and if you want an island that's bursting at the seams, this might be the only way to go. Happy Tropicans make more babies, although you could also try imposing a contraception ban by cosying up to the church.

Mainly an open-play game (ie you rule until you're kicked out of office), you can also set the game to end under certain winning/losing conditions. If you start growing your moustache now it should be ready by the time the game ships, in March next year. PZ


Surely you could squeeze more hotels in there. Don't worry about the greenery.



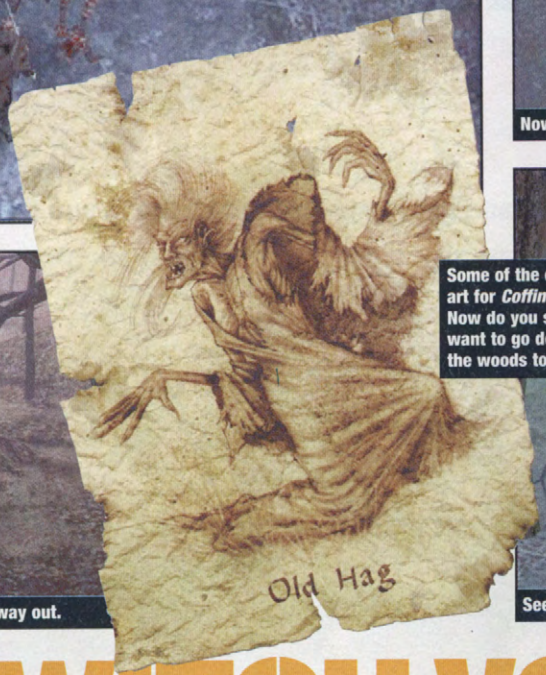
Can you imagine stumbling across this scene after a night on the tiles?



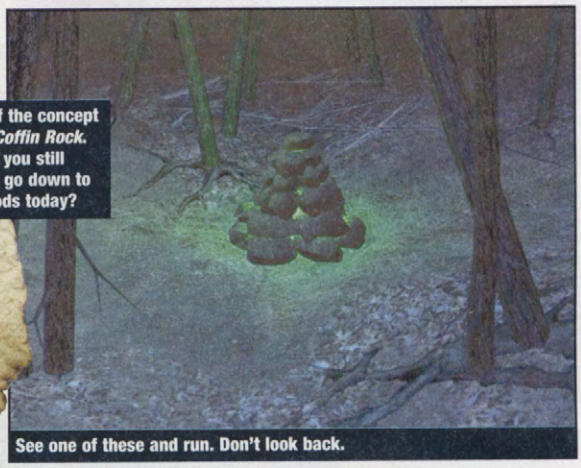
Now there's a dapper zombie. They don't make 'em like that any more.



Expect to wander around woods looking for the way out.



Some of the concept art for *Coffin Rock*. Now do you still want to go down to the woods today?



See one of these and run. Don't look back.

BLAIR WITCH VOLUME 2: THE LEGEND OF COFFIN ROCK

Dave Woods thinks he saw the _Blair Witch_ on Hampstead Heath, but Tony swears he never lets her out after dark

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Human Head Studios/ Gathering Of Developers
PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive
WEBSITE www.godgames.com
OUT November

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- The first game rocks
- Blair Witch legend is genuinely scary
- Nocturne engine providing the visuals

FIRST ENCOUNTER

"Scary. It made the hairs on the back of my neck stand up on end. I kept seeing things that weren't there," said Keith Pullin, when I quizzed him about the first *Blair Witch* game. But then he was playing in a thunderstorm, with the lights off. And he is a complete pussy. Anyway, he was very impressed and it looks like the Gathering Of Developers (GOD) may have pulled off what we thought was almost impossible – namely, transferring the Blair concept and atmosphere on to the PC screen. Check out his review on p82 for the full rundown.

Rather than releasing a single game, the idea was to create three smaller titles, charge less (£19.99) and release them in consecutive months. A fine idea and one that lives or dies on the quality of the first release. All of which means that Human Head Studios, developer of *Volume 2: The Legend Of Coffin Rock*, is now breathing a huge, collective sigh of relief.

Coffin Rock is going to be a different kettle of fish from the adventure-oriented original. The developers are plotting a straightforward *Resident Evil*-style romp, set in Burkittsville, Maryland, where something nasty's lurking in the woods. As with the original film, the legend behind *Coffin Rock* is pretty sick. Five men from Burkittsville are sent out to find a small girl, only to end up bound to one another on the rock with their entrails scattered everywhere. Nice. And if that's your cup of tea, you'll be pleased to know that things get a lot worse before they get any better.

"The developers may have pulled off what we thought was almost impossible – namely, transferring the Blair Witch concept and atmosphere on to a PC screen"

In the game, you play a soldier who wakes in the woods with a blinding headache and no idea of who you are or what happened. A typical Saturday morning, you might think, but then a mysterious girl turns up and invites you back to her grandmother's to recuperate. All very Little Red Riding Hood, eh?

Sensing your wound needs attention, you oblige. When the small girl goes missing, you're dubbed 'Lazarus' by the grandmother and you have to investigate the mystery and work out how you fit into the dastardly proceedings. Set around Burkittsville itself and the woods made famous in the original film, you have to find out if the Blair or Wood Witch is responsible for the girl's disappearance, or heaven forbid, if there's something even worse out there. Cue eerie music.

If GOD can actually stick to its release schedule, we should have a review of *Coffin Rock* next issue and, after a blinding first release, we're starting to get excited – oh, and just a little bit scared. PZ

COMPETITION

WIN!

A TRIP FOR 2 TO SAN FRANSISCO

GIVEAWAY MADNESS!!

Rev up your engines and get ready for the chance to win the trip of a lifetime



Microsoft has just released the sequel to our favourite driving game, *Midtown Madness* – you can read the full review on page 72. It features two brand new locations, London and San Francisco, and is the safest way to write off sports cars, trucks, fire engines and even police cars without getting a single point on your license.

To celebrate this joyous occasion, we've teamed up with Microsoft to offer you the chance to win a trip for two to one of the locations featured in the game. We pleaded with Microsoft to let us send you to London, capital of the world, but they refused and insisted we sent you to San Francisco instead. Tuh!

Still, there's plenty to do over there. If you've seen *Bullit* or *The Rock*, then you'll have witnessed some of the most spectacular car chases in celluloid history. Answer the following question, and if you're the first entry out of the editor's pointy hat, then we'll send you and a friend to the glorious city of San Francisco, put you up in a luxury hotel and provide a hire car for the week so you can recreate some of the driving action for yourself.

QUESTION: In which city was the original game set?

Just answer the question and send it on a postcard, along with with *all* the information requested, to the address below.

- *Title, Forename, Surname, Address, Postcode, Daytime phone number and your e-mail address*
- *Please indicate on the postcard if you do not wish to receive details of further special offers from companies other than Dennis Publishing Ltd Ltd*
- *Please indicate on the postcard if you are under 18 years of age.*
- *Please indicate on the postcard if you are you a current subscriber*

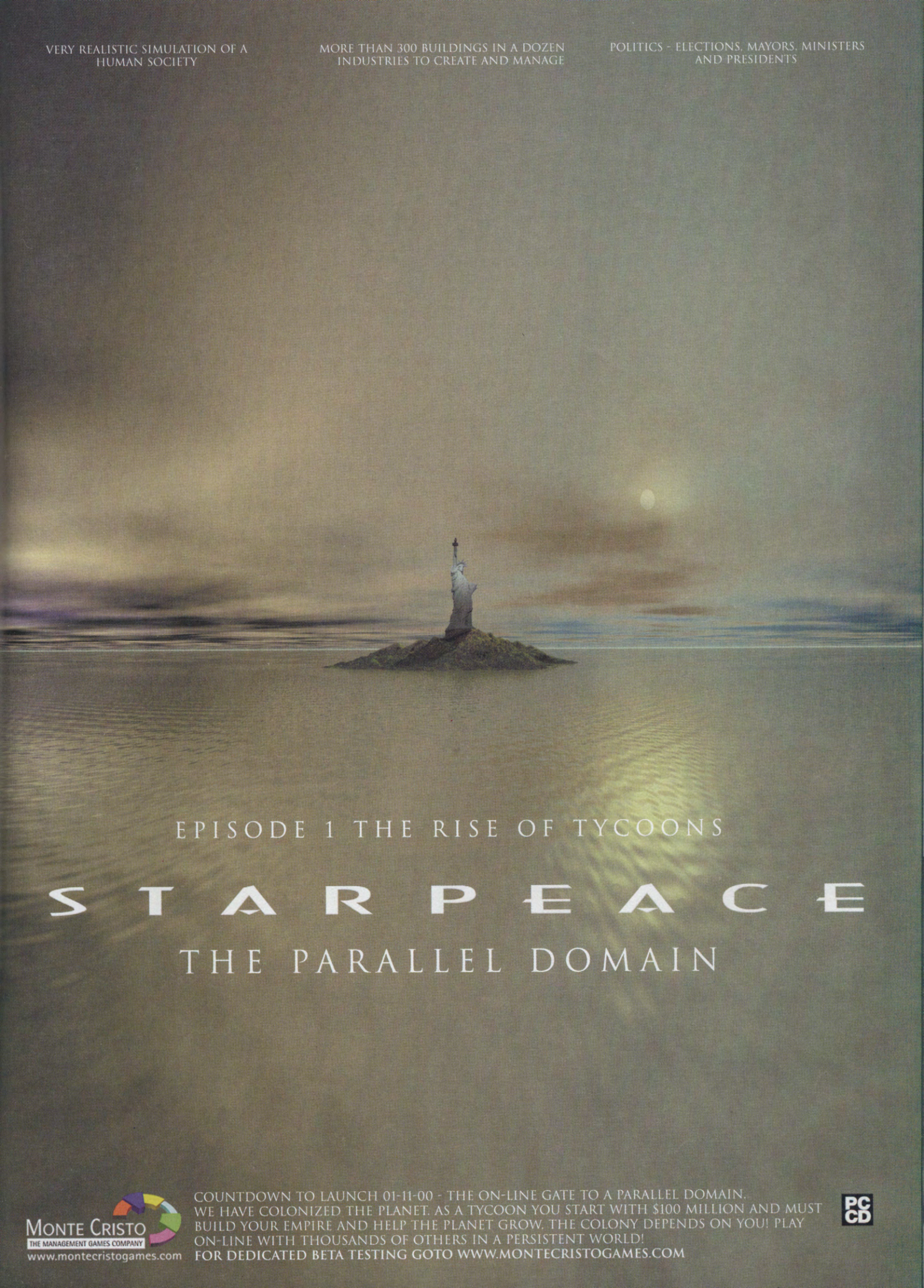
Send your entry to: *PCZ* Midtown Madness Competition CPCZ1202, *PC ZONE*, Dennis Publishing, PO Box 154, Bradford, BD1 5RZ. (Closing date: Wednesday 15 November, 2000).

Terms and conditions: Only entries with all the questions completed and received before the closing date will be entered into the prize draw. Winners will be notified by post. No cash alternative. Prizes not necessarily as shown. No correspondence will be entered into. The editor's decision is final. The prize winner must be over the age of 18 or accompanied by an adult. All the other usual competition rules, conditions and restrictions apply. And all that. Phew!

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PC CD

GARM TIGER IS AN EARTH COP, FRAMED BY HIS OWN MEN AND THROWN INTO A WORLD OF CRIME AND CORRUPTION. HIS MISSION TO UNEARTH THE SCUM OF THE UNIVERSE. UNFORTUNATELY, IN THE PANDEMIA SYSTEM, CORRUPTION HAS NO FACE, WHICH MEANS TO UPHOLD THE LAW HE MUST BECOME WHAT HE HATES THE MOST.

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PC ZONE REVIEWS

Don't spend a single penny until you've checked out the *ZONE* reviews first – we'll tell you which games you've got to buy and which games to avoid

THE PC ZONE GAMES SYSTEM

This is the machine we use to review new titles on. Our reviewers also use older machines to get an impression of gaming in the 'real' world, but this is what we currently consider the best value-for-money set up. As games become more demanding, the specs will change to reflect that

At the heart of the machine is a 600MHz AMD Athlon processor. These babies are seriously scorching, optimised for 3D applications, so first-person shooters fly like you wouldn't believe. Faster Athlons are now available, but at the present prices, this is probably the best value for money. The system bus runs at a godlike speed, so the whole thing is like a supercar with no brake pedal.

Supporting the processor is a MaxiGamer Xentor 32 from Guillemot, purveyors of all things graphicy. Based on the TNT2 chipset, these RAM-packed beasties are designed to cope with the polygons, textures and special effects that those game developers insist on chucking at the screen. Guillemot has a new GeForce 256-based card in the offing, which we're hoping to upgrade to soon.

Pionex has supplied the cases and 128Mb of PC100 memory for the motherboard. For gaming, especially with RAM prices as they are at the time of writing, 128Mb is the optimum amount. The cases have room for expansion without taking up excessive space. Nifty floppy slot too…



Hard drive services are provided by the stunning 7,200rpm, 20Gb Maxtor DiamondMax Plus (from the 5120 family of drives). It's large and fast with room for full installs and quick to load games when you want to play them.

Sound services are supplied by VideoLogic. The SonicVortex 2 card is a PCI device featuring Aureal A3D 2.0, ideal for gamers. The latest drivers are stunning, using the card's own chip to reduce the processing overhead on the CPU when calculating 3D audio. Aureal's API now handles not only sounds themselves, but also their reflections: as you approach a doorway, you can hear sounds from the room reflected into the corridor. Immersive stuff.

VideoLogic also supplies speakers from the superb Sirocco range. We primarily use Crossfires for gaming – they may seem expensive, but you get twice the quality you pay for. Four satellite speakers and a humungous subwoofer give pinpoint accuracy for 3D audio and bass meaty enough for the rumbliest explosions. We also use other speakers from the range (the original Sirocco and new Sirocco Pro) for sound card testing.

Guillemot's DVD Theater setup provides not only the ability to load games quickly, but also to watch DVD movies (essential for reviewing games – not) with its bundled MPEG decoder card.

Peripherals are supplied by Microsoft, from USB mice (top-notch for first-person shooters) to the full force-feedback monty – joysticks and driving wheels – and the ubiquitous SideWinder gamepads.

Last but not least, are headphones from Philips (when the others in the office are suffering from Sirocco overkill) and fabulous 17in Brilliance monitors (107Bs). If you're used to cheap monitors typically bundled with new PCs, the crispness and stability of the image on these comes as quite a shock.

REVIEWS YOU CAN TRUST



We at *ZONE* pride ourselves on telling you exactly what we think. Our reviewers are the most experienced and talented in the business. They're all experts in their chosen genre, and won't pull any punches – if a game's not worth buying, we'll tell you why. But we don't leave it there. We want to know what you think of the games that come out, which is why we have our Feedback section on page 97. This is where you get the opportunity to put your point of view into *PC ZONE*.

CHECK THE SPECS!

The standard spec machine these days is a P233 with 32Mb of memory – but before a game you need to make sure it will work on your system. Because the tech specs on packaging can be a little optimistic, make sure you check out the We Say bit in our tech specs box. This is where we report on what we think the minimum tech specs should be. If a game runs like a tortoise on the machine listed by the publishers, we'll tell you. All the games reviewed are tested on the minimum-spec PC as quoted on the packaging.

WHERE TO CALL

Having trouble finding any of the games listed in the reviews section of the magazine? Here are the numbers you need to call:

Acclaim 020 7344 5000 • **Activision** 01895 456700 • **Anco** 01322 292513 • **Blue Byte** (Germany) 49 0 208 450880 • **Codemasters** 01926 814132 • **Cryo** 01926 315552 • **Eidos Interactive** 020 8636 3000 • **Electronic Arts** 01932 450000 • **Empire Interactive** 020 8343 7337 • **Europress** 01625 855000 • **Gremlin Interactive** 0114 263 9900 • **GT Interactive** 020 8222 9700 • **Hasbro Interactive** 020 8569 1234 • **Infogrames** 0161 827 8000 • **Interplay** 020 7551 4222 • **Microids** (France) 00 33 146 01 54 01 • **Microsoft** 0345 002 000 • **Mattel** 01444 246333 • **NovaLogic** 020 7405 1777 • **Rage Software** 0151 237 2200 • **Take 2 Interactive** 01753 854 444 • **THQ** 01483 767656 • **Ubi Soft** 020 8944 9000 **Zablac** 01626 332233

MEET THE TEAM

All *PC ZONE*'s reviewers are experts in their field. We like to give every game that comes in for review the best chance, which is why we give it to a fan of the genre



CHRIS ANDERSON
GENRE RPG, adventure, strategy
CURRENTLY PLAYING *EverQuest: The Ruins Of Kunark*

What would have been your World War II nickname and why?

Sir Runalot, you wouldn't catch me near those bombs and guns.



DAVE WOODS
GENRE FPS, RPG, arcade
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Frogger 2* and *Counter-Strike*

LL Cool D, because ladies love cool Dave.



RICHIE SHOEMAKER
GENRE RTS, space combat
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Sudden Strike* and *Counter-Strike*

Bosch, because of my Germanic heritage.



MARK HILL
GENRE Adventure, RPG, turn-based
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Deus Ex, Baldur's Gate* and *CS*

Yossarian, because there's always a catch.

FRESH AIR

REVIEWS EDITOR Dave Woods



First the good news. You might have noticed that the magazine is a bit thicker this month, and you can thank the impending festive season for the extra pages. However, check down the list of the games we've reviewed and ask yourself if originality is dying a slow and painful death.

I'm not saying that there aren't any quality games in this issue, far from it. In fact we've given out more awards this month than any other this year, but check out the titles. In the main review section, there are five sequels or add-on packs, four TV, film or product licenses and one belated PlayStation conversion. That leaves just four original titles out of a total of 14, although thankfully three of them are excellent reminders that games don't have to rely on familiarity to get backing.

The one game that's conspicuous by its absence is the one game that was supposed to herald a new dawn in PC gaming. Peter Molyneux's *Black & White* isn't a sequel, it's not based on a low-grade TV show and it has not been converted across from a console. Unfortunately, it's also not here, and judging by the statement made by Lionhead last month you're not going to see it until spring next year.

Problems? Not officially, and we'd much rather EA wait until the game is finished and bug-free before unleashing it onto a suspecting public, but we're keeping our fingers crossed that spring really does mean spring. Originality, in the form of *Black & White*, is a breath of fresh air but, if Lionhead doesn't deliver then other developers might find it hard to get backing for projects that don't ring an immediate bell in the minds of the most jaded individual.

WHAT DO OUR SCORES MEAN?

90-100% Here at *ZONE* we score every game out of 100. If a game receives the impressive score of 90 or above, it is awarded the *PC ZONE* Classic award. These games are original, innovative, compelling and are worth buying even if you're not really a fan of the genre.

80-89% Games that score 80-89 get the *PC ZONE* Award For Excellence. These are excellent examples of their type of game and if you're a fan of the genre you should definitely consider buying the title.

70-79% Any games scoring between 70-79 have just missed an Award For Excellence, but don't ignore them. The score is well above average and that means you're getting a great title that's worth the investment if you're a fan of the genre.

50-69% Games that score in this region don't win any awards, but they're above average and well worth a look. If you're not a fan of the genre though, they will probably offer limited long-term appeal.

20-49% These games are below average and you should really only consider parting with your cash if you're a big fan of the series or genre, or if you happen to see them at a reduced price.

0-19% Games that score less than 20 should be avoided. They offer little in the way of long-term appeal, can be frustrating and definitely aren't much fun. If a game is seriously bugged, then it will also fall into this category. You have been warned.

REVIEWS CONTENTS



A perfect example of how not to play B17.

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IT'S A TOUGH CALL...

Under the *ZONE* scoring system, new games will have to be pretty spectacular to receive this award. They will have to take their genre to unprecedented new heights, and represent a major step forward for PC gaming. There are now very few titles that can justifiably be described as *PC ZONE* Classics. This trend will continue across all genres. Generally speaking, all *ZONE* Classics are must-have titles (the benchmark title being the definitive game of the genre), but that does not mean you should discount games that score 80+ per cent. These games receive the *PC ZONE* Award For Excellence and are essential buys if you are a fan of the genre the game fits into. Classics, on the other hand, are games we think will appeal to everyone and will bring new fans to that particular genre. There will not be many of them. When we say a game is a Classic, we mean it!



MARTIN KORDA
GENRE Strategy, space combat
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Shogun: Total War* and *Counter-Strike*

Don't ask stupid questions, I wasn't even born back then, so how could I have had a nickname? Duh...



STEVE HILL
GENRE Football, racing
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Star Trek Voyager: Elite Force*

I wouldn't have had one as I wouldn't have gone. I'd have stayed at home cowering under a pile of coats.



PAUL PRESLEY
GENRE FPS, action/adventure
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Deus Ex* and *Counter-Strike*

Squiffy MacWithers, because it sounds good when it's screamed in bed.



KEITH PULLIN
GENRE Adventure/RTS
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Diablo II*

I wouldn't have had one, because my troops would have had too much respect for me.



JAMES LYON
GENRE Action/adventure
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Star Trek Voyager: Elite Force*

Fletch Masterly. With a name like that I'd probably get to go over the top first. In a clown costume.



ADAM PHILLIPS
GENRE Action/RPG
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Deus Ex*

The Corpse. Self-explanatory really.



Through the round window...



Not a pleasant sight.



That's one less Nazi field to hamper our brave boys. (*You missed, didn't you? – Ed.*)

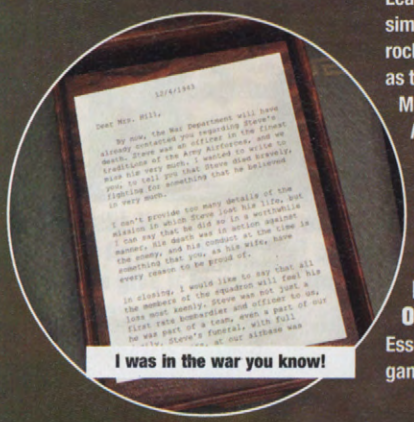
B-17 FLYING FORTRESS:

£29.99 • Hasbro Interactive/MicroProse • Out now

Cabbage crates over the briny. *Paul Presley* squarly harley charley farley...

1992. A time of great change. The Bosnian conflict entered its second fun-packed year, the United States recovered from four years of George Bush by appointing a sex-mad yokel as president, and Manchester United began an annoyingly unstoppable assault on the newly formed Premier League. Meanwhile, the flight sim genre was about to be rocked by a bold new approach as then-mighty publisher MicroProse unveiled *B-17 Flying Fortress* to an astonished public. Eight years on and we've got a sequel. Who says this is a fast moving business?

PC ZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE



I was in the war you know!

BALLY JERRY'S ON THE MOVE

Essentially this is the same game as the original, albeit with *vastly* improved graphics (there is a shot of the 1992 version on page 58 if you want to compare and contrast). You control every aspect of life in a ten-man B-17 crew. Everything. From planning missions and directing the war as a Squadron Commander to twiddling the knobs on the wind drift scale as a navigator.

Surprisingly, it isn't the nightmare of administration you might think. Once you're in mid-air it quickly becomes second nature to jump around from one station to the next, and you spend as much of the game in crew management mode as you do in simulation mode. Perhaps more. Flying is actually pretty secondary to the whole game. The computer does a good job of running things in your absence. As soon as you leave a station the AI takes over so you never have to worry about flying into the side of a hill while you examine the map or scan for fighters.

Despite that, it's something of a surprise just how attached you do get to the crews, probably down to the fact you get to see them physically moving about the plane during a flight. This is especially true if you rename the crews and planes. Our advice is to name them after the cast of favourite films and TV shows. Watching 'Linda Lovelace' bailing out of a crippled 'Deep Throat' is enough to bring a tear to the eye, so to speak.

ON YOUR OWN

"We've had to take the multiplayer code out."

"Hmm?"

"Do you think that will affect things much? Will it get marked down as a result?"

I've been pondering this ever since Hasbro's PR lass thrust a beer into my hand and asked the question during a press trip to Duxford Air Museum. On the one hand it seems that everything has to have some sort of online

WALKTHROUGH

DROP YOUR LOAD

Any US high school student knows how to fire a loaded gun at his enemy. The real challenge in *B-17* is making sure your payload of death and destruction lands on or around your actual target. No easy thing from 20,000 feet...



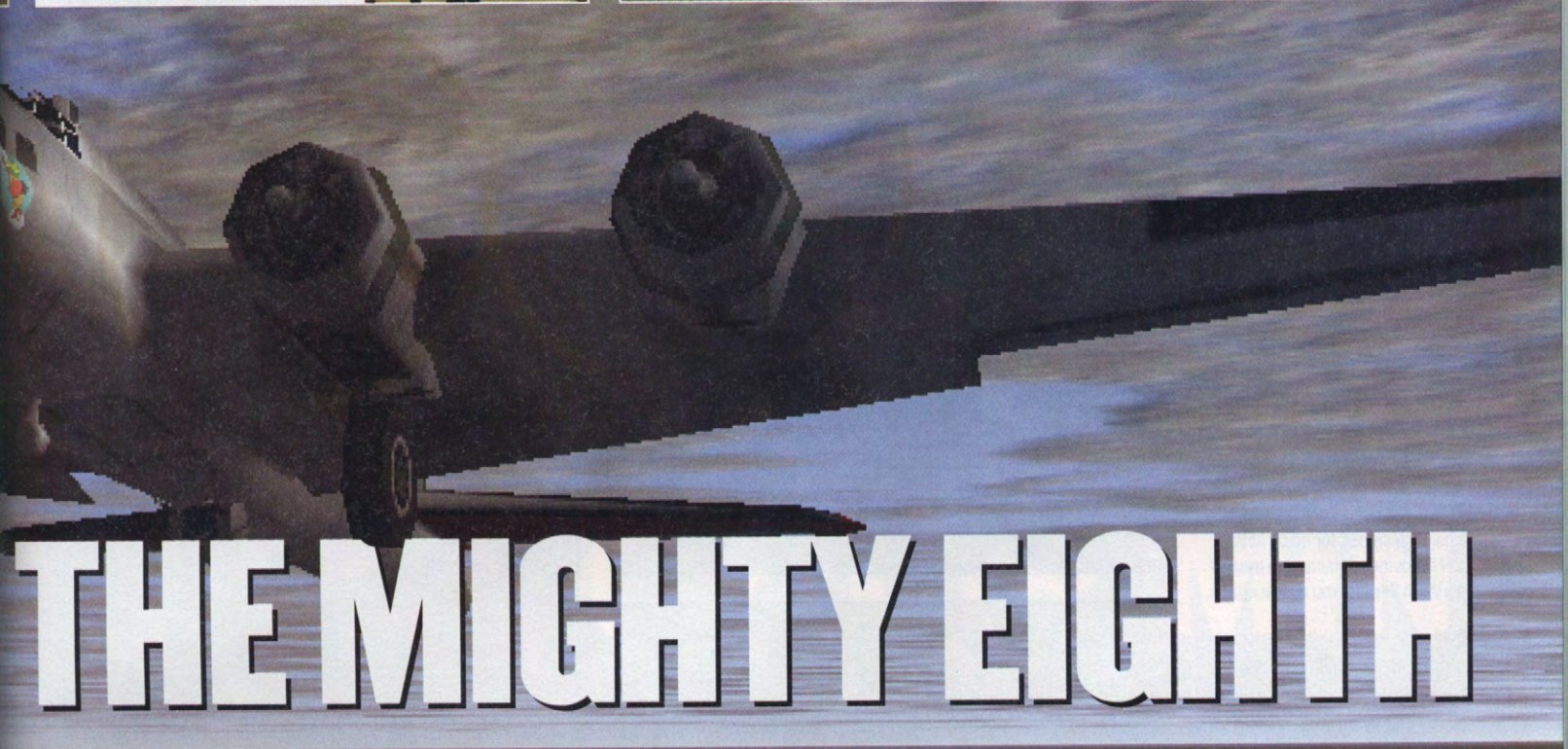
Those evil Nazi scum have been producing new soldiers at an alarming rate. Your target is the baby milk factory at Bremen. That should halt their development.



The briefing room. If you're lucky you get to watch *EastEnders* before you take off.



Oh bugger!



THE MIGHTY EIGHTH

facility to it these days, even where it isn't warranted. On the other, is the online audience really that large in the flight sim market? Doing a spot of research on the newsgroups elicits a mixed response. Some are feeling let down by the lack of a multiplayer B-17 game, even to the point of saying they won't be buying it as a result. Others, and this does seem to be a much larger share of the crowd, aren't too fussed. Just make sure it works, they say, memories of *Gunship!* and *Falcon 4.0* still fresh in their minds.

The thing about *B-17* is that I can't really see how it would make for an effective multiplayer experience. Yes, of course, you could have up to ten humans all in the same bird at once, each at a different station (although the radio operator would get pretty bored). But this would only really become fun during Luftwaffe attacks and they tend to be few and far between for the most part. So what about having one player controlling each plane, Mr I Have All The Answers? The problem there is co-ordination. How many of you – and be honest here, even you really, really dedicated flight sim nuts – are actually going to fly through an entire mission in real time? You're going to sit there for anything up to six hours, holding a steady course, occasionally responding to an attack, mostly just keeping things ticking over are you? You might do it once, but I guarantee you'll be using the time skip function more often than the fire button before long. So how do you do that online? How do you deal with the switch between crew management screens and simulation world, while randomly jumping forward through time, across up to eight different PCs all connecting to each other at different speeds? You don't. It would be a logistical nightmare and you know it. There isn't a viable multiplayer

"Nothing is going to top *B-17* for painting an accurate picture of life in a bomber crew"

END



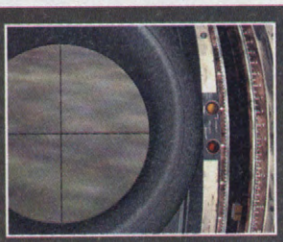
2 Your bombers are still in formation and they have survived both flak and Luftwaffe attacks. So, let's see how close you are to reaching the target.



3 The Navigator's been doing his job well and you're on course for the target. Better than the last time when you got lost over Ipswich and mistook Coventry for Berlin.



4 The Bombardier has activated the Norden bombsight and is searching for the target. Let's hope it'll be all right on the night (ho ho). (*You're fired – Ed.*)



5 Too much cloud. The target is obscured and you wouldn't want to risk accidentally hitting the football stadium that is just next door. German football might never recover.



6 Then again...



Don't tell me... the exit handle is... Oops!

game in here that would provide satisfying gaming experience.

Oh and don't throw the *Air Warrior*/ *Warbirds*/ *World War II Online* argument at me. "They do real-time bombing runs with multiple players, why can't *B-17*?" They're not dealing with a real-world scale. At most, a bombing run by a dozen planes takes an hour, most of which is spent getting into formation. Distances are either compressed big time or the game takes place in fictional locales designed for quick action. *B-17* provides an accurate map of northern Europe. You do the maths.

2+2=17

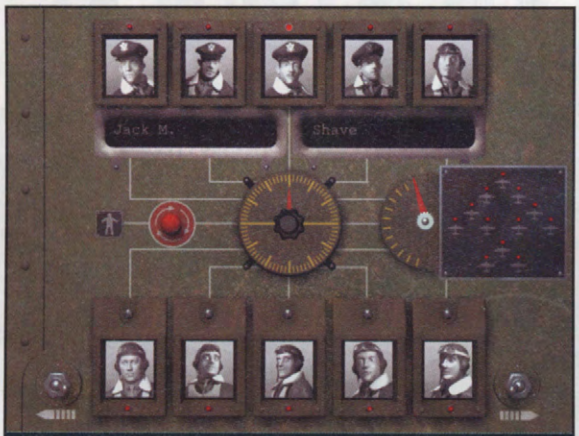
So be told. No multiplayer doesn't equal less fun. If anything it has meant that Wayward has been able to focus on making the single-player game a thing of beauty. Will it appeal to everyone? Probably not. The fact that it isn't purely a flight sim may attract a larger crowd than usual, but what might hinder *B-17*'s progress is it can become repetitive over time.

Sure there's the option to jump into the fighter craft and zip around in a dogfight or two, or there's the strategic element involved with planning missions and managing your crew (you don't have to fly at all if you don't want), but essentially each flight boils down to the same thing.

That's hardly Wayward's fault though. If you must point the finger, blame WW II for not being more varied. There is a crop of WW II sims on the way that may have more thrills in the dogfighting department (Rowan's *Battle Of Britain* looks nice in this respect), but nothing is going to top *B-17* for painting an accurate picture of life in a bomber crew. Except maybe *Memphis Belle*. But that was a film. So it doesn't count. I'll shut up now. PCZ

And the boys at Heathrow think they've got it bad





The likely lads. A motley crew. The good old boys. The lads from the farm. The, er, kids in the hall. Uhh...



The P-51 Mustang. Yesterday.

PATHÉ-TIC NEWSREEL*

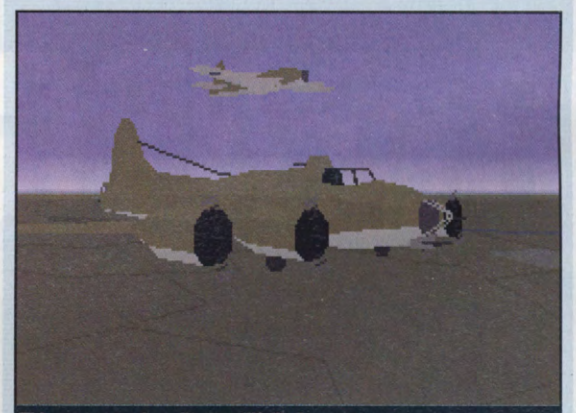
Dateline England. 1992...

With the allied war effort continuing to keep Jerry at bay, thanks mainly to the war having been over for the past 47 years, a plucky young upstart is attempting to match the mighty American flight simulation division. The boffins at Wayward Design have come up with *B-17 Flying Fortress*, a new approach to the genre. Tough luck G I Joe, it seems we Brits are more than a match for your heavyweight sims. MicroProse certainly thinks so, and has released it to rapturous applause and critical acclaim. Hey, young *PC Leisure* reviewer, what do you make of it?

"It sets a new benchmark for flight sims and is one of the best we've seen in years." – *Paul Presley, PC Leisure Magazine, 1992*

You said a mouthful, Sir. And you're not alone. The public has gone *B-17* crazy over it, proving once again that whatever those Yankee boys can do, we Limeys can do better. And who knows, maybe one day in the future, when the world is still free of Adolf's threat and the computers are all connected by a global network of some kind, little Johnny will be able to get his daddy to 'download' a free copy of the game from some kind of 'site' on this 'web' of computers, perhaps by typing http://www.bombs-away.net/downloads/. Until then, keep up the good work boys, England is proud of you. (*You see why we don't let you write many reviews? – Ed.*)

***(Note: this will help if you imagine it running on a jumpy black and white projector with a plumy, upper-crust news announcer reading the text. Look, if we're prepared to put in the effort month after month, the least you can do is lend a hand from time to time...)**



This was once described as 'lifelike'.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII 300 Memory 32Mb **WE SAY** Seriously, if you're not up to a PIII 600 with at least 128Mb RAM by now, you really shouldn't be playing flight sims at all. Also, get yourself a GeForce card. T&L really adds to the charm

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Authentic • Highly detailed • Not just a simulation • Plenty of atmosphere

DOWNERS No multiplayer • A touch repetitive

87 Bally good show

IN PERSPECTIVE

The only real contenders to *B-17* are still to put in an appearance. You can try *European Air War* (also from MicroProse), Janes' *WWII Fighters* and *Combat Flight Sim* from Microsoft. Oh, and there's always the original, which is available on the Net.

B-17 Flying Fortress: The Mighty Eighth

WWII Fighters

European Air War

Combat Flight Sim

B-17 Flying Fortress (for novelty factor alone)

YOU'RE MINE

FOLLOW ME

QUICK, TAKE COVER

SPEAK YOUR MIND

MICROSOFT SIDEWINDER GAME VOICE



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Microsoft

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SUDDEN STRIKE

PC ZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

★ £34.99 • CDV • Out now

Richie Shoemaker, whatever you do, don't mention The War

It seems slightly ironic that, after a war of unprecedented hatred, where across the Soviet Union no quarter at all was given between the German invaders and Russian forces, that a Russian software developer and a German publisher have come together to release a game recreating those same events. Less ironic, but more importantly, they have combined to create a game that is original, epic, fun and – within the realms of real-time strategy at least – realistic.

IN PERSPECTIVE

Up until now the *Close Combat* series has set the benchmark for World War II-based real-time strategy. Tactics aside, *Sudden Strike* takes things a significant step further, with bigger battles and better graphics by far.

Commandos: Battle Pack

Sudden Strike

Close Combat IV: Battle Of The Bulge

C&C: Red Alert 2

Of course it helps immeasurably if a game pertaining to be realistic is based on actual events and it would have been easy for Fireglow – the hitherto unknown developer behind *Sudden Strike* – to go down the path forged by Westwood all those years ago and worn ragged by numerous developers ever since. Instead they have kept the familiar combat mechanics and removed all traces of base-building entirely. There are no fictitious minerals to mine, no natural resources to plunder and the only buildings you have access to are the ones already in place, none of which can be used to research weapons or churn out units

In contrast to *C&C*, *Sudden Strike* has no story to speak of aside from the WWII backdrop and, although in-between some missions there are CG sequences, they are amateurish rewards rather than story-driven. Another distinction is the difficulty. With most RTS titles, you naturally expect each mission to get progressively harder and new units fed to you until the ultimate weapon makes itself available towards the end of a long campaign. *Sudden Strike* has no difficulty levels to choose from and each mission varies in difficulty to a greater or lesser extent from the last. The first mission in the Allied campaign is easy, the second one comparatively impossible and the third – a massive seaborne assault on mainland Europe – a walkover. You might think this constant shift in complexity and pace stinks of shabby game design, but the truth is that it works. For example, after a difficult mission, you might naturally be wary of taking chances in the next, when the truth is that being cautious may well prove catastrophic, giving time for the enemy to reinforce and regroup.

"Every unit is incredibly well animated. Soldiers re-supply tanks, load cannons, and spark up when there's a lull in the action"

SUPPLY AND DEMAND

Although you have no option to build more units, *Sudden Strike* is not without a resource management side to the game – ammunition. Each unit in the game can only operate as long as their weapons can spit chunks of flesh-searing metal. If nearby a unit is critically short of ammo or if a vehicle is damaged, a supply truck (if you have any) will immediately spring into action, patching up damaged armour and doling out ammunition to those in need. Without supply trucks, any defending or attacking force will quickly fail. The thing is, even the supply trucks need topping up from time to time, especially if they are constantly engaged in maintenance. Without the option to drop extra supplies by air, a swift advance is sometimes the only way forward.

Comprised of three campaigns of 12 missions each (Germany's strike across Western Europe, Russia's post-Stalingrad resurgence and the final Allied push into Germany), plus nearly 30 additional one-off levels, *Sudden Strike* doesn't skimp on units. Amongst the infantry on offer are officers, snipers, riflemen, sub-machine gunners, AT troops and commandos. Even when a tank is destroyed, the surviving crew can be press ganged back into service and each individual soldier has his place on the battlefield. Officers have a wider field of view, riflemen can lay anti-tank mines and all can be used to fire heavy machine guns, mortars, field guns, anti-aircraft guns, howitzers and anti-tank cannons. Trucks which have little or no use in most RTS games can, as well as ferrying troops and mortars around, pull artillery behind them into more forward positions.

There is also a bewildering array of armoured vehicles on offer, too many in fact to list here and, even in the game manual, they have had to be grouped together to save trees. Almost every APC, armoured car, tank, mobile field artillery piece, tank destroyer and half-track you can think of on every side, save Japan, is in the game – even French. The differences between most may be difficult to spot unless you're a WWII nut, but you'll find which have the better guns, thickest armour and fastest speed through trial and error .

RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW

All these units and missions would be wasted if the game didn't play or look too hot. Of those unaided by 3D graphics cards, *Sudden Strike* is probably the best-looking strategy game on offer today. Every unit is incredibly detailed and well animated. Soldiers are seen re-supplying tanks, loading cannons, even sparking up when there is a lull in the action. Hit a tank in the right place and its tracks will be left behind. Even transport and



Bombers are far more accurate than artillery, but susceptible to AA fire.



Even ambulances aren't safe from attack.



The Germans blow the bridge just in time.

reconnaissance planes will circle to earth, engines aflame when hit by anti-aircraft fire. Even more impressive are the weapon effects. Rockets scream through the skies leaving smoke in their wake; bullets ping off bunkers tanks and buildings; and the explosions from heavy ordinance pull clouds of dust from the earth, rip through houses and leave heaps of human wreckage as evidence of each epic battle.

Each house, bunker and watchtower on the map can be seized by soldiers and used as cover. In towns, with anti-tank guns hidden and troops with bazookas nestled inside houses, tanks suddenly become an easy target in the tight streets outside. Enemy artillery too can be taken over if left intact and the gun crew killed. Tank shells have a knack of ruining enemy hardware, so if you lack long-range artillery, a quick infantry assault on a company of cannons should do the trick.

Boasting up to 1,000 units on each map, *Sudden Strike* can certainly live up to its claims. These huge battles almost get unmanageable as you lose track of fractured and broken units across the dense maps. To counter this are missions where only a few units are at your disposal, where a convoy needs escorting to safety or a bridge needs blowing up by a handful of troops. Such vast switches in the scale of battles keep you on your toes.

PRISONER OF WAR

Sudden Strike is not without it's annoyances: The maps are too flat, set as they are on only two levels of height, and the mission briefings are hardly what you'd call dynamic. There are times too when the game is punishingly difficult. Some levels can take a couple of hours with much of the time spent being bogged down with logistics rather than action and, although each unit gains experience in each battle (although this isn't carried over into the next), it would have been fantastic if inexperienced and outflanked troops surrendered – giving the enemy a headache by having to escort their prisoners to the edge of the map.

One major problem is the multiplayer game. Rather than give each player a number of points to spend on units before each game, it sends out preset units to each player depending on the map. The aim, whether you play a team game or not, is to control certain points of the map (highlighted by barrage balloons), after which reinforcements make an appearance. For team games it works fine, but more multiplayer modes are desperately needed if people are to continue playing *Sudden Strike* after the single-player missions dry up.

All that aside, for a generation of RTS gamers brought up on Victor comics and classic war films, *Sudden Strike* is a dream come true. What is so goddamn infuriating is that *Sudden Strike*'s approach to resource management is so original and intuitive that you wonder why no-one has thought of it before. As real-time strategy games go, it's as real as they get and, in terms of gameplay, up there with the likes of *Command & Conquer, Age Of Empires* and *Total Annihilation*. WWII aficionados sick to death of stuffy turn-based war simulations would do especially well to pick up a copy. PCZ



Ammo crates tend to explode violently when attacked by German bombers.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P233 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** Our PII-450 with 64Mb RAM had no problems at all

PCZ VERDICT

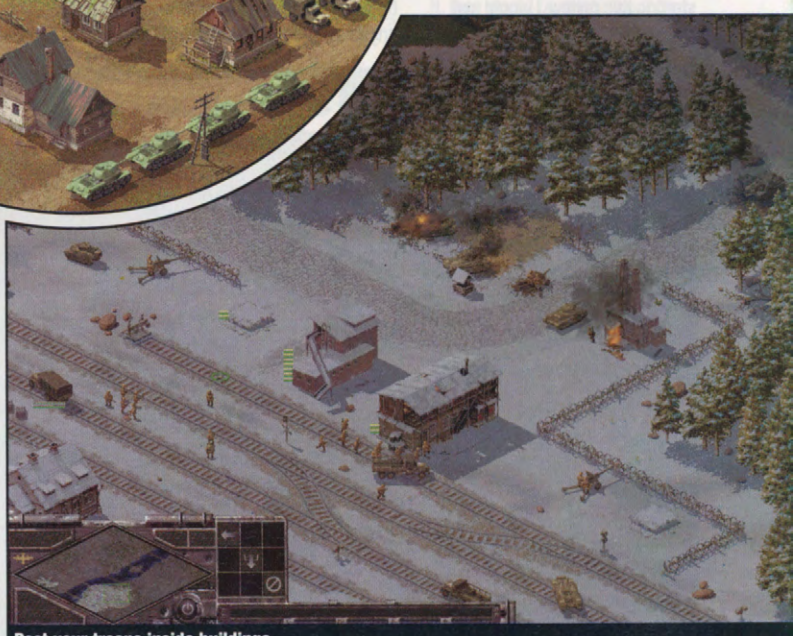
UPPERS Varied missions • Many innovative features • A near perfect balance between realism and gameplay • Detailed graphics • Dozens of units and missions

DOWNERS Extra multiplayer options urgently needed • Dodgy CG animations and some poor presentation • No automatic save

86 One of the finest WWII games ever made



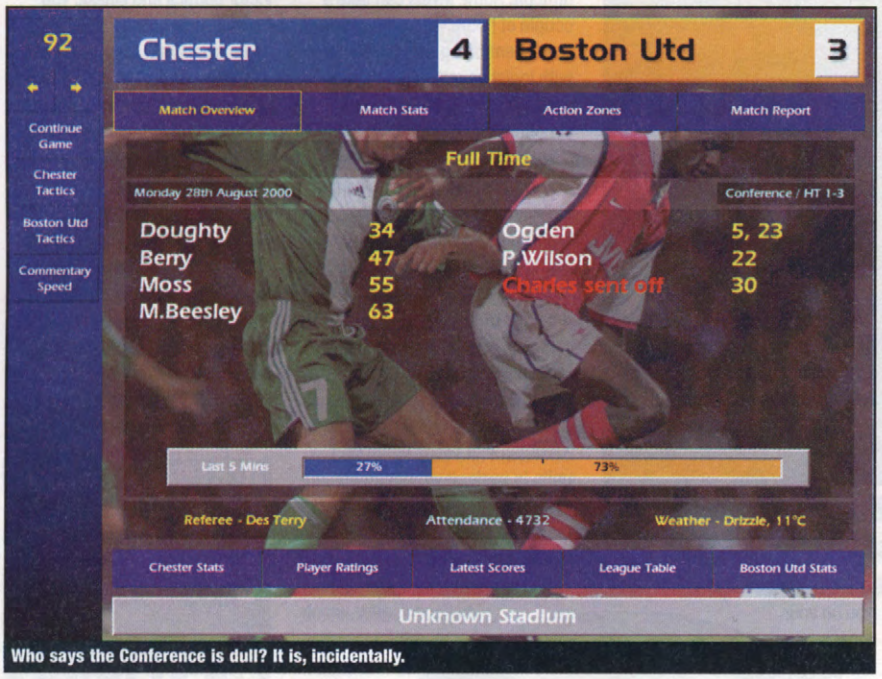
Saving Private Ryan anyone?



Post your troops inside buildings.

CHAMPIONSHIP MAN

£19.99 • Eidos Interactive • Out 27 October



Who says the Conference is dull? It is, incidentally.

Now that he's got his hands on the latest *CM*, *Steve Hill* might just make it through another English winter

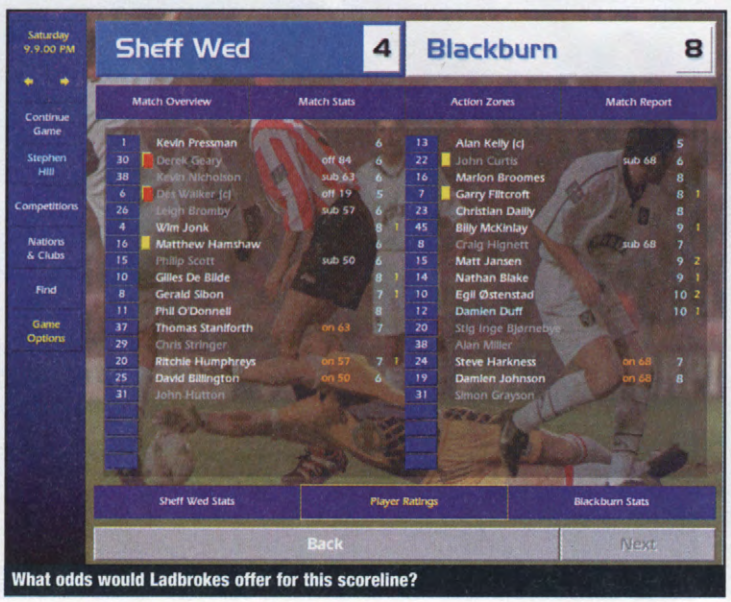
There have been scandalous suggestions within the pages of this rag that the sum total of my gaming achievements to date has been guiding Chester City to relegation in *Championship Manager*. Before starting this review, I would just like to refute this heinous rumour and expose its perpetrator as a liar. He's completely wrong, as I have in fact led them to glorious promotion. So eat it, Shoemaker. Besides, way before that I managed to complete *Manic Miner* five times in a row. And anyway, since when has gaming been about achievement? If anything, sitting in your smalls squinting at a monitor is the antithesis of achievement. Surely games are nothing more than an entertaining way of using up the hours of your life between doing proper stuff. Becoming a 50th level druid might make you feel like a man, but it's not really going to impress the girls, is it? So poke it, goblin boys, the *Champ* is back – and, amazingly, it's back early. Slippage is almost the norm in this haphazard business, and as such a game coming out on time is generally the exception rather than the rule. A game actually being released early is rarer than rocking horse shit. That's what's happened here, though, with this seasonal update being unleashed upon an unsuspecting public some two weeks ahead of schedule. It might not seem that big a deal in the greater scheme of things, but such is the fervour with which each incarnation is greeted that those two weeks will amount to thousands of lost hours, numerous petty arguments and a slew of lies and recriminations. Why? Because *Championship Manager* is the most compulsive, addictive, debilitating game ever devised. Of course, devotees will already know this and won't be wasting precious minutes reading this superfluous review when there's a new version in the shops. Conversely, non-believers aren't going to be interested in hearing the truth and will probably have long since skimmed past this page in search of pictures of monsters. Which in theory leaves a grand total of no readers, offering scope for reams of garbled nonsense and undetected profanities.

PC ZONE CLASSIC

THIS IS THE MODERN WORLD

However, just in case there's anyone who's been walking around with their head up their arse for the last few years, or is being forced to read these words at gunpoint, we'd better explain what all the fuss is about. *Championship Manager* is a comprehensive football management simulation that recreates the day-to-day experiences of a manager in extraordinary detail. However, unlike lesser games, that does not include setting the price of tickets, stocking the club shop with key fobs and deciding what brand of hot dog to serve at half time. It might seem an obvious strategy, but *Championship Manager* has always been about decisions that affect the performance on the pitch. Armed with a vast army of researchers and developers, Sports Interactive has squeezed an entire world of football on to a shiny compact disc. To call

"The next few weeks will amount to thousands of lost hours because *CM* is the most addictive, compulsive, debilitating game ever devised"

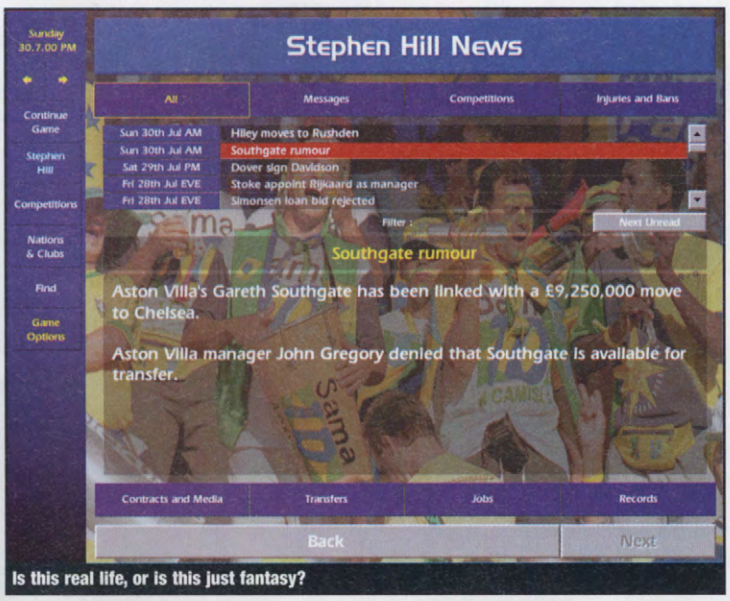


What odds would Ladbrokes offer for this scoreline?

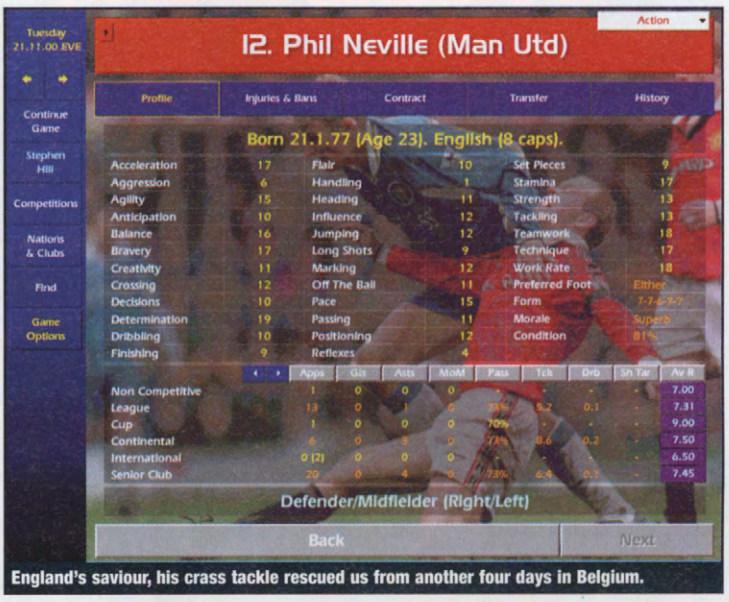


The Collyers won't enjoy this one, as the Red-noses win a fiercely contested derby.

AGER: SEASON 00/01



Is this real life, or is this just fantasy?



England's saviour, his crass tackle rescued us from another four days in Belgium.

Championship Manager the benchmark title of its genre doesn't really do it justice. It's so far ahead of the competition that it's simply unfair. That it manages this without recourse to 3D graphics is testament to its accuracy, design and depth.

Of course, to the PlayStation generation, a game without graphics is a contradiction in terms and a heinous aberration that many will be simply incapable of getting their frazzled heads around. It's been said before and it'll be said again, but the easiest explanation is that the imagination is far more powerful than any graphics card. If a further analogy is needed, consider how many graphics there are in a book. None at all, unless you're some kind of moron, yet this pioneering form of handheld entertainment is still apparently quite popular.

NUMBERS GAME

Through the medium of words and numbers, *Championship Manager* manages to create a wholly believable universe that sucks you in and keeps you there. Beginning a game is undeniably a daunting challenge, faced with endless banks of names and statistics. However, things soon begin to take shape, players' talents become apparent, and in time a mental picture of each member of your squad is created. Consider that this latest version features 26 leagues comprising some 50,000 players, managers and coaches, each with their own unique attributes, and you'll believe us when we say this game has some depth.

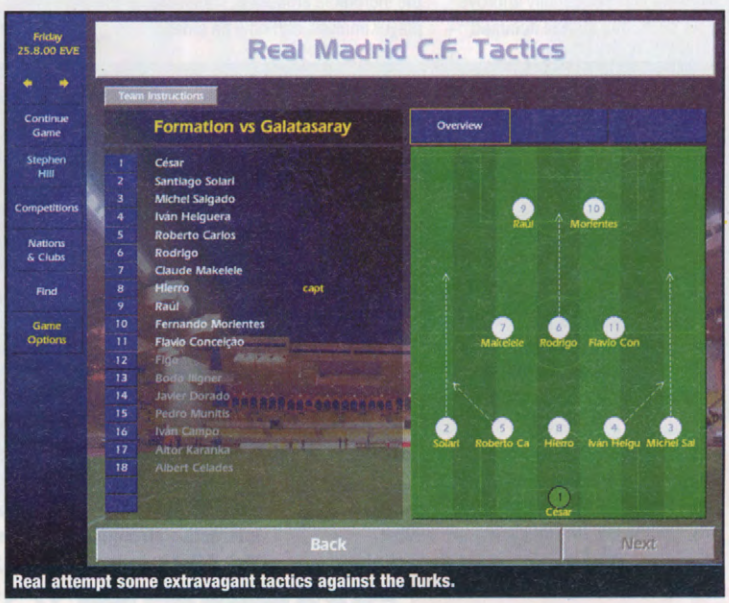
It's always amusing to read press releases of inferior management games, dismissing 'boring on-screen stats' in favour of their 'stunning graphics for maximum realism,' ie meaningless, unwatchable match action. The developers of *Championship Manager* are often accused of being anal in their attention to detail, which is a basically dismissive way of saying that they do things properly. *Championship Manager* is a game made by people who care. By way of example, let's look at the opposite end of the spectrum. There's an apocryphal *PC Zone* story that involves then editor Jeremy Wells and writer Patrick McCarthy being given a demonstration of EA Sports' latest risible cash-in licenced affair. Wishing to check the stats of his beloved Spurs, McCarthy asked to be shown the Tottenham Hotspur squad, at which point the Canadian in charge asked: "Is that in Scot-Laaand?" Forget it.

TO UPDATE, OR NOT TO UPDATE...

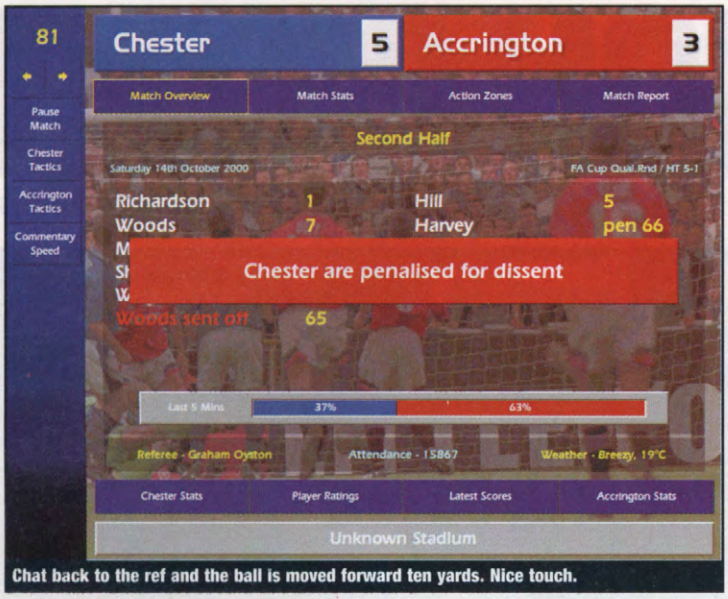
On the subject of EA, we gleefully mock them for hoodwinking the public by selling them the same game every six months, yet let's not forget that *CM: Season 00/01* is actually a seasonal update, as the name might suggest. An unruly element has inevitably questioned why they should buy this when it's essentially the same game as last year. The simple answer is that they don't have to, they can simply sit at home counting their 20 quid over and over again. However, in not buying it, they would be missing out on a great deal. Because the game



Getting burgled in North London, or tanning his hide in Barcelona? Tricky.



Real attempt some extravagant tactics against the Turks.



Chat back to the ref and the ball is moved forward ten yards. Nice touch.



Weaver apparently had to have his stats improved following complaints from Eidos chairman.

mirrors actual football so closely, it's essential to update it if a realistic representation of the modern game is to be maintained. These days, a week is a long time in football, so a year is almost harking back to a more innocent age. Transfer fees have continued to spiral, rule changes have been made and new competitions have been instigated, not to mention the thousands of changes in personnel. As well as covering all these eventualities, new gameplay elements have also been introduced, as despite their total dominance of the market, the Collyer brothers are showing no signs of complacency. Unlike EA's curious ploy of sometimes releasing worse versions of *FIFA*, the trend with *Championship Manager* is to continually improve it. As such, this stands accused of being the best version yet. Improvements include increased media involvement, with the intrusion of the press enabling you to build a better picture of players' abilities. Backroom staff can now also be consulted over a player's worth, helping you to decide whether to give him a new contract or show him the door. And in a further reflection of real-life antics, managers can approach the FA to request the postponement of fixtures and even complain about the referee. More functional stuff includes the advent of a live league table, enabling you to chart your team's position minute by minute, a vital aid in a relegation battle, as this reviewer knows only too well. And if you're not already satisfied with the incredible amount of statistics, player analysis can now be aided with information about shots on target and pass completion ratios.

And let's not forget that 20 quid is approximately half the going rate for a top of the range title. It seems odd to happily spend £300 on a new graphics card to add a bit of lens flare while you pounce around a futuristic world for 10 minutes, yet balk at shelling out £20 for a year's worth of entertainment. In fact, *Champ Man* is actually an investment that will save you money, given the number of evenings you'll spend in playing it rather than pissing it up the wall.

"*CM* is an investment that will save you money, given the number of evenings you'll spend in playing it rather than pissing it up the wall"

IT'S NO FUN

Championship Manager will always have its critics, though, and a recent poorly argued rant seemed to dismiss it because it wasn't 'fun'. That's hardly the most easily quantifiable constant, although the dictionary describes it as 'pleasure, gaiety and merriment'. There's no doubting the pleasure at snaffling a late winner at some bleak northern outpost, although gaiety and merriment do tend to take a back seat. That said, judging by the haunted looks that proliferate *Match Of The Day*, being a football manager isn't necessarily a barrel of laughs, and it is this experience that the game recreates.

Ultimately, you get out of it what you put in, and every person's experience is different. Rather than playing as a generic character, you compete in the game as yourself, and must live or die by your decisions – even when you roll in pissed and blow your promotion. That a series of text messages can cause genuine panic and elation is testament to the game's colossal power. As is the fact that this review has been written in the midst of a glorious FA Cup run. Well, qualifying for the first round, anyway. How's that for an achievement? PM



A sickening reminder of last season's devastating relegation. Piss.

A GREAT BIG MELTING POT

Sports Interactive Kick It Out

***Championship Manager*'s uncanny crossover with actual football has been well documented, not least in these pages. A further link with the real world is added in this version, as Sports Interactive has announced a prospective partnership with Kick It.**

Out, which will see the association's 'Kick Racism Out of Football' logo displayed both within the game and on the packaging.

Oliver Collyer, joint managing Director of Sports Interactive, said: "Statistics show that there are more non-white youngsters playing football in the UK than there are whites. However, when we look at the amount of non-whites that ever make it into the stadia to watch football matches, never mind those that actually go on to play, coach or manage at a professional level, we see there is an alarming disparity. There are clearly good reasons why non-white people don't go to the matches, and the biggest one is the amount of abuse and intimidation they are likely to receive once they get there. This has got to change and we at Sports Interactive strongly support the good work of Kick It Out in trying to change this situation."

IN PERSPECTIVE

Lord knows how many times we've said this, but if you want a really comprehensive, gripping simulation of modern-day football management, buy this. If you want to feel cheated, pay twice as much for any of the other homogenised, shallow graphical showpieces.

Championship Manager: Season 00/01

UEFA Manager 2000

Football Manager 2001

Player Manager 2000

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P133 **Memory** 64Mb RAM **WE SAY** More RAM makes for more leagues

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Extraordinary realism • Innovative improvemets

DOWNERS Your girlfriend'll hate you • Makes your games collection obsolete

93 Definitely the best 20 quid you're likely to spend this year

HMV

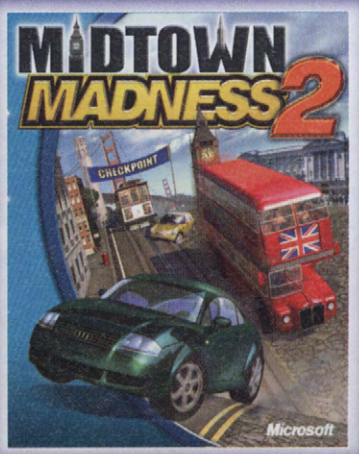
recommends..



CRIMSON SKIES

It's 1937 and air pirates roam the skies over a shattered alternate America. As Nathan Zachary - dashing air pirate, ace pilot and notorious ladies' man - your assignment is to lead a squadron of privateers through 24 thrilling missions, battling against backstabbing air pirates and double-crossing corporate titans. Armed with an array of weapon combinations and fantasy planes, battle your way through this awesome, swashbuckling adventure!

OUT NOW



MIDTOWN MADNESS 2

Midtown Madness 2 delivers all of the same madcap racing excitement as the original but with even more intense racing challenges in two brand new locations: London and San Francisco. Choose from 10 new vehicles, each with unique performance and handling characteristics, for a variety of unbelievable racing challenges.

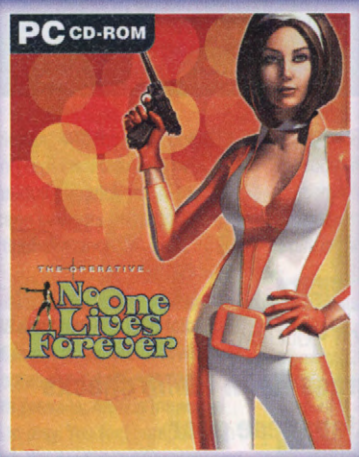
OUT NOW



COMBAT FLIGHT SIMULATOR 2

The most exciting and compelling WWII Pacific Theatre air combat experience available on the PC. The flight dynamics of each accurately engineered aircraft capture the true sensation of flying these magnificent machines. With an enhanced depth of play, improved active campaign structure and multiple branching missions, *CFS2* will immerse you in a new level of realism.

RELEASED 27TH OCTOBER



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NO ONE LIVES FOREVER

Be the sexiest spy ever, with guns, gadgets and cool locations galore! With tense subterfuge and in-your-face combat, fight your way through 15 single and 10 multi-player missions, stunning graphics, 30 unique weapons and gadgets and a whole host of outrageous villains to be disposed of! *No One Lives Forever* is the game to die for.

RELEASED 1ST DECEMBER

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Always take your time and remember guards' patrol routes.



Being alone doesn't mean you can't dish out punishment.

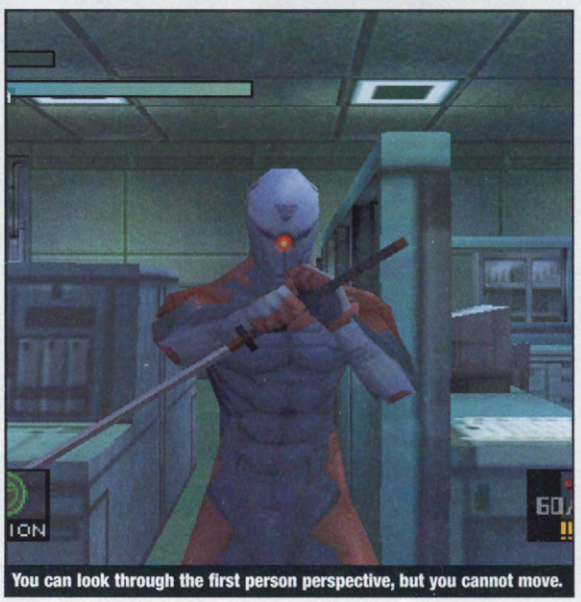


Numerous traps litter the terrorist headquarters.



Not one of the better hiding places Snake has chosen in his career.


Finding cover in perilous situations is the only way to survive.



You can look through the first person perspective, but you cannot move.

METAL GEAR SOLID

£29.99 • Microsoft • Out now

Snake in the grass *Keith Pullin* checks out the latest Japanese gear

You know you're dealing with an epic game when you park your arse down to write the review and discover you're still shaking with excitement. With *Metal Gear Solid* this is exactly the scenario.

PC ZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

Despite its belated PC appearance and only slight graphical improvements over the PlayStation version, this combination of gameplay styles is one of the finest examples of action and storytelling the PC has ever witnessed. It's easily on a par with *Half-Life* when it comes to creating tension and emotion and there's even that unique *Final Fantasy* ingredient whereby you develop a real affection for the main characters involved. Your actions even determine the outcome of the story, so theoretically you can play through again and again and experience a new set of emotions each time.

So, what about the actual plot? Well, without giving away any story-spoiling intricacies, let's just say that terrorists, nuclear missiles, double agents and enormous, walking, nuclear missile-launching robots are just some of the trials and tribulations our anguished hero, Solid Snake has to endure.

At the start of the game he has very little to aid him in his mission. As he progresses onwards through third-person perspective tank hangars, armouries, laboratories and other James Bond-type locations, Snake slowly acquires machine guns, remote controlled missiles, grenades, sniper rifles, stinger missiles and numerous other gadgets on his quest to spray as much brain tissue and guts through the air as possible.

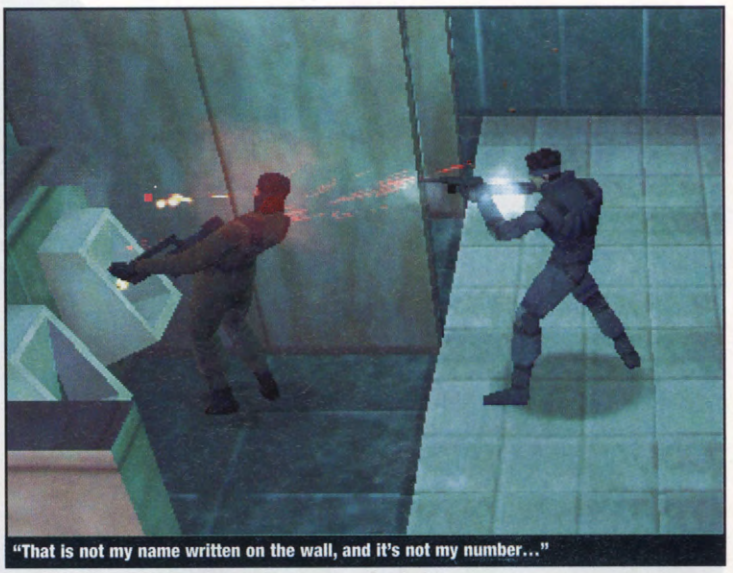
"You feel compelled to reach the next stage because some of the end-of-level bosses are so utterly enjoyable to do battle against"

But it's not all mindless maiming. One of the traits of the *Metal Gear* series of games over the last 14 years (the first one appeared on the Nintendo Entertainment System in 1986) has been to base the gameplay on basic puzzle-solving, as well as apocalyptic shoot-outs. There's no denying that it's a style of play that takes some getting used to; your first foray through the snow-covered opening stage usually ends with a guard following your footprints and pumping your face full of lead, as you peer around a corner to see if the coast is clear.

A separate CD of optional VR training levels helps when it comes to understanding the espionage tactics needed to survive (even if there are 300 to

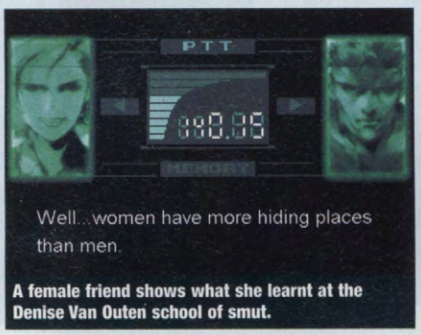


You can only defeat the end-of-level bosses when you learn their pattern.


"That is not my name written on the wall, and it's not my number..."

INNUENDO CONTROL

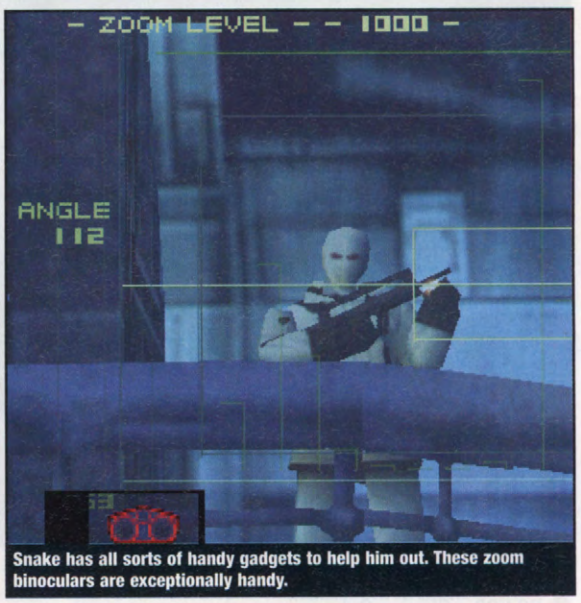
For some reason a large part of the game is based on dubious sexual connotations and innuendo. Snake himself is not particularly keen to go along with this, possibly because he knows that, with a name like Snake, he's got a lot to live up to. Still, it doesn't stop the ladies trying it on. Anyway, fact is, whenever you use your radio to touch base, you'll get a lot more than you bargained for...



A female friend shows what she learnt at the Denise Van Outen school of smut.



Just the name of an accomplice... No really.



Snake has all sorts of handy gadgets to help him out. These zoom binoculars are exceptionally handy.

wade through). But, on a more cynical note, you wonder whether the excessive amount of stages is an attempt to make up for the fact that there is no multiplayer game.

IN PERSPECTIVE

With elements from a variety of games, including *Half-Life*, *GoldenEye*, *The Phantom Menace* and the *Final Fantasy* games, *MGS*'s strength lies in its movie-like plot and smooth gameplay. If you're looking for originality, forget it. But if you're after a reasonably challenging and highly compulsive action game, you won't find much better.

Hidden & Dangerous

Half-Life

Final Fantasy VII

Metal Gear Solid

Thief: The Dark Project

SNAKE EYES

Essentially, *MGS* is played from an overhead perspective that's very similar in look and feel to *The Phantom Menace*, although other views do come into play. If you back into a wall, the camera automatically swings down to point directly at you and is a view that's useful when it comes to checking down hallways or around corners to see if enemy henchmen are laying in wait.

And then we come to the much-hyped first person mode; an added extra we were told would bring a whole new dimension to the game. Unfortunately, this simply hasn't happened. Why? Because it simply isn't there. OK, so you can look around in that mode – but can you walk, run, jump or even shoot? Not on your nelly. The only real first-person action you get is when you find a sniper rifle and some Stinger missiles. Admittedly shooting down a Hind helicopter with said missiles is a serious rush, but couldn't Konami have made a little more effort to produce a first-person view that could be enjoyed throughout the whole of the game?

While we're on the subject of movement, you may be interested to know Snake can be tricky to control if using the keyboard. Pointing a weapon at somebody is usually a fraught procedure involving dozens of miniscule taps on the cursor keys to get it right. The auto aiming helps alleviate this to an extent, but there are plenty of locations where perspective and panic combine to make the whole procedure irritating. If you've got a gamepad handy, use it.

And, while we're having a bit of a moan, it's only fair to mention that, although generally superb when it comes to keeping the story ticking over and charged with excitement, the frequent cut-scenes do go on a bit. Sometimes conversations between Snake and his supporting cast go round in circles, with the main points being repeated over and over. Thankfully, a quick tap of the Escape key gets rid of that particular nuance.

GET LOADED

MGS does have its little foibles – that much is obvious. Yet when it comes down to it, one major point prevails: *MGS* is immense fun to play. You feel compelled to reach the next stage because you want to see what further twists the plot can take, and equally because some of the end-of-level bosses such as the Cyborg Ninja are so utterly enjoyable to do battle against. The fact that loading times are ridiculously short is another major reason why you simply cannot leave your PC.

Ultimately, this version is barely any different from the PlayStation game of two years ago. But it doesn't matter – because if a game is truly good, it can stand up and be counted on any format it's released on. *MGS* is recommended for exactly that reason. If you need a light mix of stealth and action, *Metal Gear Solid* is the only choice. PZ

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** PII 233 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 250Mb HD Space **WE SAY** PIII 500 with 64Mb RAM and SideWinder gamepad

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Gripping plot featuring excellent characters • Great gadgets • Five difficulty settings • 300 VR training missions • Common sense save system

DOWNERS Cut-scenes poorly scripted in places • Tricky keyboard controls • No real first-person view

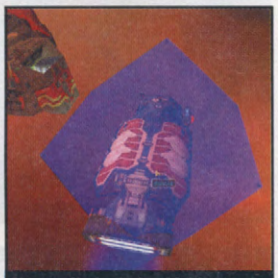
82 Solid as a rock



The new mothership has a modular design, which means you can add research and support units as needed.



Small touches even include landing gear.



New units include shield generators.



Some of the old favourites are still intact and as good as ever.

HOMEWORLD: CATACLYSM

£34.99 • Sierra • Out now

"It's not an obsession, it's just an enjoyable game." *Paul Presley*'s protestations aren't fooling anyone...

PC ZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

Oh how it all comes flooding back. It's like it had never been away. I guess it was no secret that I was something of a *Homeworld* fan the first time round, but after swearing off the thing for four or five months (mainly to have it replaced with an equally unhealthy *Counter-Strike* obsession) I thought that maybe it was out of my system. That maybe now I could look at it with a more objective eye. Criticise its unwieldy 3D system, its cartoonish graphics, its hackneyed storyline. Five minutes into *Cataclysm* and the glassy-eyed stare of concentration, the lack of awareness regarding the real world, the nervous twitching on my fingers and the slowly-drying reservoir of sputum forming on my chin gave me my answer.

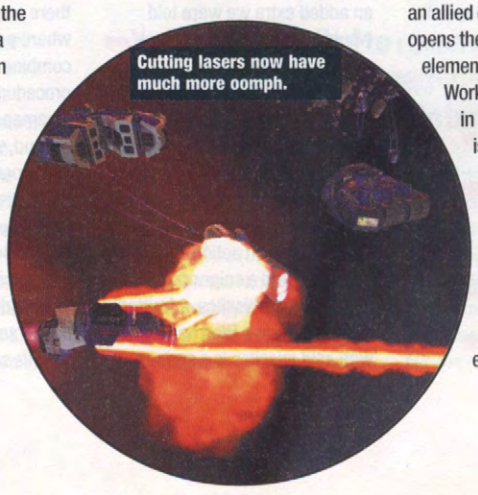
Homeworld is back.

SCI-FI PLOT #348B

Barking Dog Studios apparently started working on *Cataclysm* a year before the original game was actually finished. The plucky developers (who seem to be making a habit of improving other peoples' games – part of their team had a hand in *Counter-Strike*) approached original designers Relic with a mission to improve on what they'd already seen of *Homeworld*. At the same time Relic had a bucket full of ideas that for one reason or another weren't able to be included in the original game. Cupid's arrow hit and the two teams pooled their talents. Hence the reason *Cataclysm* isn't being touted as a sequel to *Homeworld*, but as a sort of official follow-up. It's the first 'episode' to take place in the *Homeworld* universe (which indicates more may follow).

So what's this 'episode' all about? Actually that's a good description, since unlike the grand, sweeping tale of a lost race that was seen in *Homeworld*, *Cataclysm*'s single-player game does feel more like a traditional episode of any science fiction TV show. It's the old 'alien life force infecting allied ships' plot – the Borg with organics rather than technological origins.

Despite the hackneyed background, it is remarkably well told considering it mainly uses the in-game engine. You start in command of a simple mining vessel, are quickly called in to lend a hand with some rebel insurgents, get sent to investigate a distress call and find a strange alien artefact. Despite every sci-fi fan on the ship screaming at you not to, the device is brought on board and quickly infects the lower decks. You ditch them before it spreads and so is born The Beast. As forces are sent to attack they become infected and the race is on to stop it before it, er, assimilates the galaxy.



Cutting lasers now have much more oomph.

IN WITH THE NEW

Part of the reason why it works is the well thought out universe where it all takes place. Unlike the two basic sides in *Homeworld*, *Cataclysm*'s world is populated with many different clans, all dealing with each other in different ways. Hence you often find yourself called in to help out an allied clan in a fight, which opens the original game's tactical element to whole new levels.

Working with friendly forces in the midst of a battle is often as rewarding as working out your own strategies.

It also adds a bit of variety. Although you only have a limited number of ships at your personal disposal, each clan has variations


It still retains those Homeworld moments of high drama.


Combat is as hectic as ever.


The map is more detailed, showing explored areas as an ever-expanding box.


Particularly nice are the improved explosions.


The Beast is your staple 'infected good guy' sci-fi enemy. It even talks like the Borg.

on themes and things hardly ever get repetitive (one of the criticisms that was often thrown at *Homeworld*).

Which is also true of your mothership. It starts out as a basic carrier style affair, but once the infected decks have been jettisoned you're free to upgrade it however you wish. One of the biggest criticisms levelled at *Homeworld* was the basic nature of its research tree. Barking Dog has tried to vary things here by assigning certain research paths to different research modules. If you don't build the module, you can't follow the path. Unfortunately, the research areas can also be used to build support bays for your ships, allowing for larger fleets and better defences. So it's a balancing act. And it does improve things, albeit slightly. The actual nature of the research remains the same, but since no one else has come up with any innovations in this area it remains a minor criticism at best.

SAME OLD, SAME OLD?

Other improvements come in the form of waypoint commands (allowing useful patrol routes to be set up), linking technologies that allow two or more ships to join together *Power Ranger*-style, new units such as ramming ships, hive frigates, multi-role worker units, and mimics (who do exactly what they say on the tin allowing for all sorts of sneaky infiltration tactics), and a generally greater feeling of control all round. Those that found things somewhat confusing in *Homeworld* will find things a little easier here. Being able to issue orders from the improved map screen helps immensely and everything just seems to run smoother than it did before.

Cynics may well argue that there's nothing arse-shatteringly new here, and since Relic knew all about these features during *Homeworld*'s development they should have put them in to start with, rather than charge us another £35 for what is basically a mission disc. At the least they should have followed Microsoft's *Age Of Empires* model and released it as a cheaper expansion pack.

"Although the new features don't sound like a lot, they increase playability by a factor of ten while eliminating a lot of the problems *Homeworld*'s critics may have had with it"

This is a tricky situation. On the one hand they're right. There is nothing particularly different about any of it and the fact that a seasoned *Homeworld* veteran felt so at home right from the off sort of confirms that. On the other hand it is still incredibly playable and although the new features don't sound like an awful lot, they do increase the playability by a factor of ten while eliminating a lot of the problems *Homeworld*'s critics may have had with it.

Should you buy it then? Honestly, yes. If you didn't buy *Homeworld* then I'd recommend you skip it and go straight for *Cataclysm*. It's a more rounded product and less overwhelming than its predecessor. There's enough here to please *Homeworld* fans too, more than enough. An engaging storyline and more strategic options than you can shake a stick at. Should it have been a mission pack? Of course it should. But it isn't and it does have the advantage of running straight out of the box. Besides, at the end of the day it's only £35 and you could probably do with a weekend off the booze anyway. PCZ

IN PERSPECTIVE

Well, there's always the original *Homeworld*, but if you haven't already got it then you're better off with *Cataclysm*. *Imperium Galactica 2* and *Starfleet Command* both do the 3D space strategy thing, but within much stricter turn-based arenas.

Homeworld

Homeworld: Cataclysm

Imperium Galactica 2

Starfleet Command

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** PII 233 **Memory** 32Mb **WE SAY** We had it running fine on a PII 300 with 128Mb RAM and a TNT2, but there was occasional jerkiness in larger battles

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS It's *Homeworld* • Well-told storyline • Nice new units • Plenty of new features

DOWNERS Well, it is still *Homeworld* • Some may still find the total 3D nature confusing

85 ***Homeworld* part II, but no worse for it**

STAR TREK: NEW WORLDS

£39.99 • Interplay • Out now

These are the voyages of the starship *ZONE*, its mission to seek out new games, and explore new, original ideas which boldly go where no game has gone before. *Martin Korda* reports

Star Trek, the series may boldly go to the outer reaches of space, but *Star Trek: New Worlds*, doesn't go anywhere. Instead it skulks around the bars frequented by failed RTS games, fraternising with the likes of *Force Commander* and other franchised disappointments. Like them, it's been led astray by its affiliation with a successful sci-fi series, which has turned it from a decent and potentially competent RTS game into a hyped-up and deluded drop-out, destined to be scorned by its more successful rivals as it trawls the streets aimlessly, going nowhere fast.

SO YOU'RE SAYING YOU DON'T LIKE IT, THEN?

Not exactly. What we're saying, is that *Star Trek: New Worlds* has gone down that sad old route of relying on a license rather than concentrating on its own merits. Apart from the realistic movements of your units, the fantastically overdone explosions and the atmospheric music, it's hard to find too many positive things to say about it.

Star Trek: New Worlds isn't solely centred around combat, as it also focuses on construction and research. Perhaps you're thinking that this sounds like quite a good idea, but it's not. For starters, you don't even get a choice of where to build your base, so the adrenaline rush of looking for a potential building site while fending off marauding enemy units is lost straight from the offset. The first 15 minutes of a mission are usually spent constructing and upgrading the correct buildings to complete your first mission objective (yawn), while desperately trying to get to grips with the ridiculously unclear interface, and disorientating first-person viewpoint option. You'll soon discover that using the good old overhead view is the only practical way to play.

Most missions involve several goals, which range from taking out an enemy base, to scanning buildings and analysing the results, the latter of which really is as uninteresting as it sounds.

CULTURE SHOCK

As with any sci-fi game, there's the obligatory new race to discover. You know the story. "Captain, we've discovered a new mystical race, they appear to be deeply superstitious and we need to tread carefully, blah, blah, blah." In *Star Trek: New Worlds*, this race is called the Taubat, and your choice of which one of the three sides (Federation, Romulan or Klingon) to play as, will affect your attitude towards them.

> **"Had it gone under any other name, it would have been seen as just another 3D RTS to drop off the production line"**

After discovering these new worlds, the Romulans are intent on claiming them as their own. These pallid skinned humanoids fight greedily among themselves for possession of the new planets, in tanks that look like giant spanners. The Klingons and the Federation, also turn up to stake their claim. At which point, you realise that all sides have pretty much the same selection of weaponry. To make matters worse, the combat is quite often reduced to a set of isolated skirmishes, so the little action you do see is usually pretty boring to watch.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

One day, in some far-off utopian future, developers will make games that are as good as the licences they're based on. Until that day, we'll just have to accept that mediocre games like this will somehow sell in droves, just because they've got *Star Trek* in their title. Had it gone under any other name, it would have been seen as just another 3D RTS to drop off the production line, and if you're prepared to ignore its background, you'll see that, in fact, that's exactly what it is. PCZ

IN PERSPECTIVE

Most of the other 3D RTS games are a better bet than this, even *Dark Reign 2*, and that's saying something. There are plenty of other ways to kill boredom and this is not one of them.

Ground Control

Earth 2150

Dark Reign 2

Star Trek: New Worlds

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** Pentium 300 **Memory** 64Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 400Mb Hard Disk Space **WE SAY** PII 400, 16Mb RAM, 3D Card

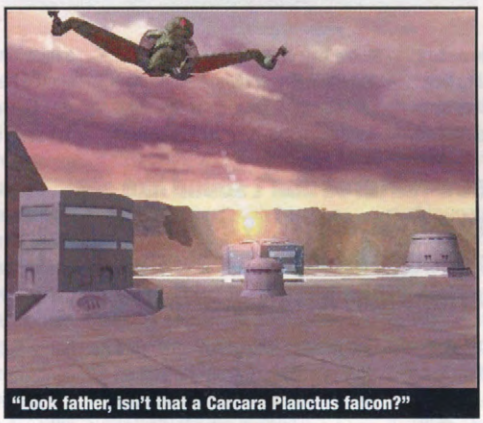
PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Great vehicle animations • Superb explosions • Atmospheric music • Three sides to play as

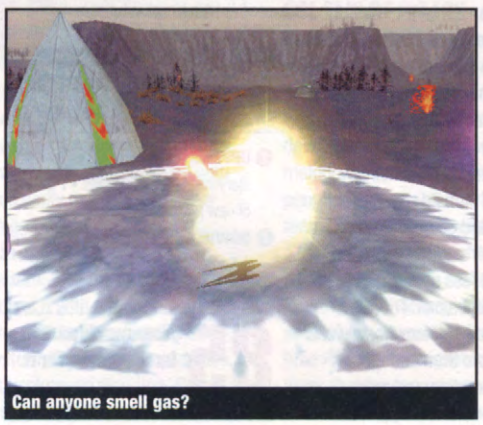
DOWNERS Rubbish camera options • Unintelligent and unvaried units • Battles are poor • Boring mission objectives • Fiddly and unclear interface

55 **Don't be fooled, it's just substandard RTS hiding behind a major-league name**

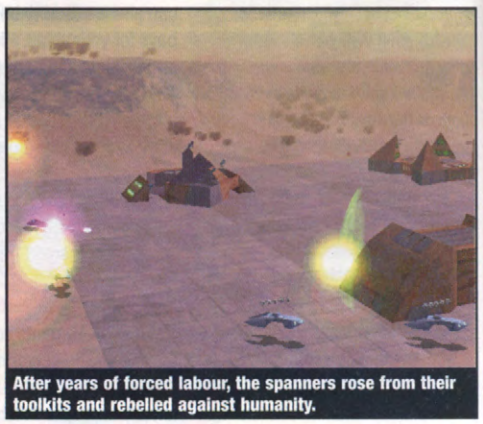

The Klingon skimming contest ended in disaster.

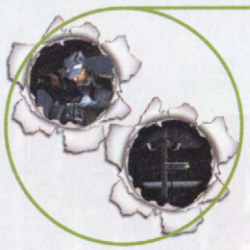

"Look father, isn't that a Carcara Planctus falcon?"


Nice aerial view, but it looks more like Devon than space.


Can anyone smell gas?


Is this *Star Trek*, or have we wandered on to the set of *The Crystal Maze*?


After years of forced labour, the spanners rose from their toolkits and rebelled against humanity.



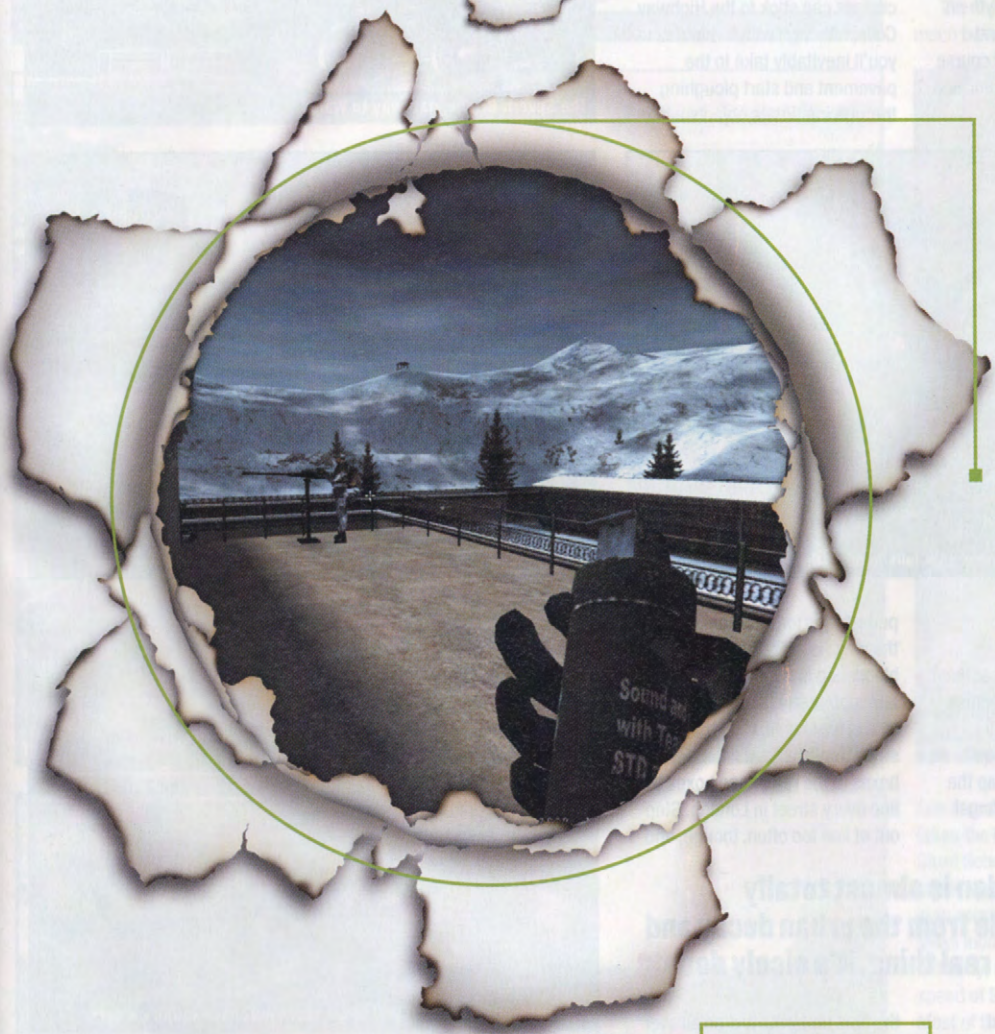
M16A2 RIFLE
Length 1000mm; barrel 510mm
Weight 3.4 kg (empty)
Calibre 5.56mm
Muzzle Velocity 950 metres per second
Cyclic Rate 800 rounds per minute
Effective Range 600 metres

The standard by which all small calibre, high velocity assault weapons are judged. Air cooled, gas operated, fired from hip or shoulder. The M16A2 is an indispensable weapon for all hostile environments.



SPAS-12 ASSAULT SHOTGUN
Length 930mm; barrel 460mm
Weight 4.2 kg
Calibre 2.75 inches (70mm)
Muzzle Velocity selective fire combat shotgun
Cyclic Rate 40 rounds per minute
Effective Range 50 metres

An assault weapon, ideal for close quarters combat scenarios. A practical and efficient weapon.



M203 GRENADE LAUNCHER
Length 380mm; barrel 305mm
Weight 1.63kg (loaded)
Calibre 40mm
Muzzle Velocity 75 metres per second
Cyclic Rate Single shot, pump action
Effective Range 400 metres

A breech loading, pump action single shot grenade launcher. Provides grenade launching capability without any loss of squad fire.

PCZONE

"...the PC game GoldenEye fans have been waiting for"



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MIDTOWN MADNESS 2

£29.99 • Microsoft • Out now

Well over a year since the first game, *Steve Hill* still hasn't learned to drive

PC ZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

It's testament to Microsoft's current standing in the games industry that we are now beginning to see a wave of sequels to its more successful games. That said, there's still no news of *Microsoft Soccer 2*, although this is perhaps understandable given that the original was one of the worst games ever released. Such early aberrations have almost been forgotten now, though, as Gates' outfit continues to make waves as a serious games company, not least by the spending of millions of pounds on a stupidly named console. Although the PC has traditionally been its mainstay and, for the time being at least, that's where the action is.

Last year's *Midtown Madness* delivered action in spades, taking a fresh approach to the staid driving genre by offering freedom of movement throughout a living, breathing city. That city was Chicago, not the most obvious choice given that nobody has ever been there and nobody knows what it looks like. However, it seemed that the game offered scope for a city expansion pack, largely due to the fact that the menu screen allowed you to select which city to race in, despite the fact that there was only one available. But that never materialised and instead they have leapt straight to a fully-fledged stand-alone sequel that offers two spanking new cities. Those cities are Aberystwyth on the West Coast of Wales and Doncaster in Yorkshire. Of course they're not, they're San Francisco and London.



The 'Please Keep Off The Grass' sign fails to deter these mindless vandals.

IN THE CITY

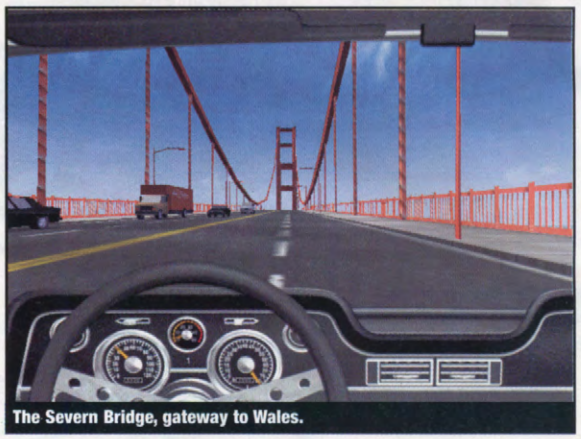
Not the most original of selections, admittedly, but at least the average prole will recognise them. At which point they'll realise that things are not quite as they seem. Rather than map the cities exactly, developers Angel Studios have by their own admission created detailed caricatures. As such, London is a huge theme park with all the major attractions within spitting distance of each other, and San Francisco consists of a big bridge and some steep hills. It works perfectly well. And while London is almost unrecognisable from the urban decay and squalor of the real thing, it's nicely done and provides a passable American's eyeview of the largest city in Europe, confirming that they still see it as the quaint village where Jack The Ripper and Mary Poppins live. Of course, the equivalent is true when cruising round the streets of San Francisco in a muscle car, and it's quite easy to imagine that you're Steve McQueen in *Bullitt*.

As in the original game, the Cruise mode offers the opportunity to get to grips with each city, offering unlimited driving time unhampered by any fuel shortage. Law-abiding citizens can stick to the Highway Code, although within minutes you'll inevitably take to the pavement and start ploughing through inanimate objects while pedestrians leap screaming out of the way. As in the first game, bloodshed is not on the menu, although pretty much everything else is breakable, from the strategically placed cardboard boxes to the red phone boxes that line every street in London. Step out of line too often, though, and the blue uniforms will be all over you like a cheap suit.

"And while London is almost totally unrecognisable from the urban decay and squalor of the real thing, it's nicely done"

CRASH COURSE

One advance from the first game is the inclusion of the so-called Crash Course mode, which is effectively a glorified tutorial. For London, this takes the form of performing various tasks in a black cab. And just to give you some idea of the scale of the city, one of these tasks involves taking in the Royal Albert Hall, Buckingham Palace, Admiralty Arch, Trafalgar Square, St Paul's Cathedral, the Tower of London and Tower Bridge in just over two



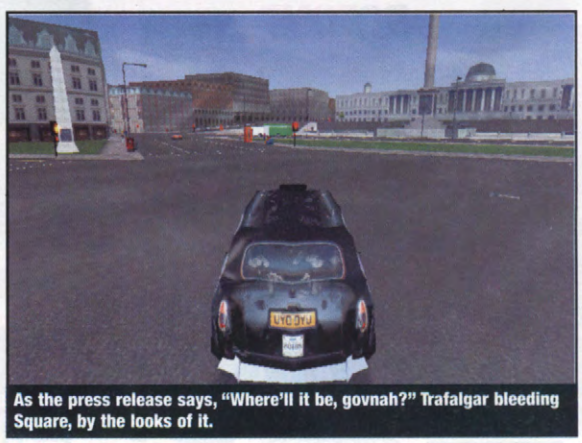
The Severn Bridge, gateway to Wales.



A cruise down Palm Street suggests that this isn't London.



Handbrake turns enable you to get more purchase round corners.



As the press release says, "Where'll it be, govnah?" Trafalgar bleeding Square, by the looks of it.

IN PERSPECTIVE

Driver is probably the closest comparison, although *NFS Porsche 2000* qualifies due to its similar challenge mode. *Midtown Madness 2* just about shades it, although, if you're poor, a cheap version of the original might suffice.

Midtown Madness 2

Midtown Madness

Need For Speed Porsche 2000

Driver



"Alright Guv, it's a fair cop. Slam on the bracelets."

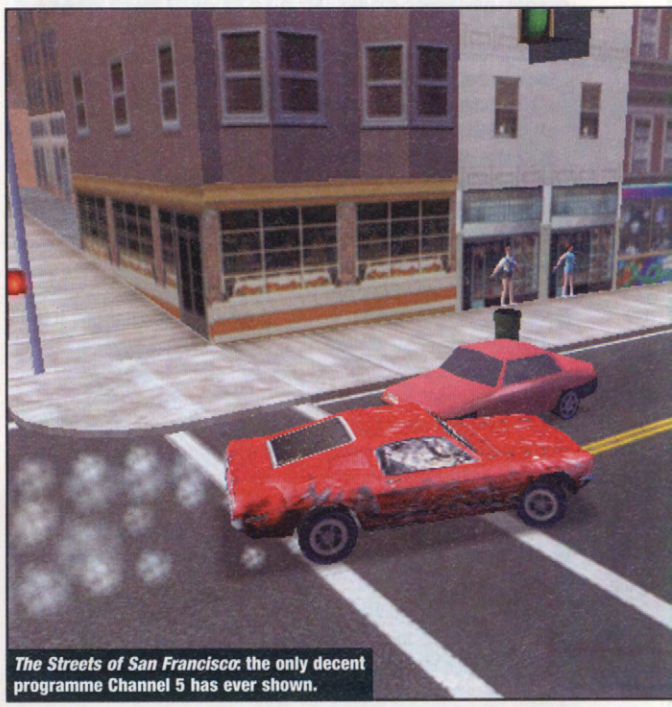
minutes. Of course, in reality, two minutes would be spent sat in traffic while the meter spiralled upwards and the driver subjected you to a foulmouthed rant. Thankfully, this isn't reality, and you can throw your cab around with gay abandon. The downside is you have to take instruction from what is supposed to be a typical London cabbie. The sensible approach might have been to employ a Londoner to provide the voice, but they seem to have enlisted the services of a second-rate Rolf Harris impersonator, whose pitiful attempts at Cockney banter grate.

The Californian drawl isn't much better, and the equivalent skills to the test, with a host of Blitz, Checkpoint and Circuit races available. Graphically, the game claims to have a new engine. Although, to the untrained eye it doesn't look a great deal different, maintaining the stylised pseudo toy-town look of its predecessor. It's perfectly workable though, and the value of the game is in tearing down busy streets, destroying everything in your path while watching the ensuing mayhem in the rear-view mirror.

The original game was a belter and, while not breaking the mould, this sequel successfully builds upon it. Both cities are larger than the original, and nine new vehicles have been added to



The trauma of public transport is faithfully simulated.



The Streets of San Francisco: the only decent programme Channel 5 has ever shown.



A brace of Beetles are no match for a pick-up truck.

San Franciscan crash course takes the form of a Hollywood Stunt School. For both locations, prizes are on offer in the form of new cars and paint jobs, as the tasks increase in complexity and difficulty; maintaining a minimum speed of 50mph, for instance. Most of them are well balanced, offering a perfect combination of challenge and frustration.

ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY...

By the time you've completed the crash course, you'll be well versed in car control, which has been markedly improved from the first game. Even in a cumbersome old black cab, it's possible to pull off stylish 180-degree turns and power slide into corners, although of course this looks far more impressive when throwing a Ford Mustang around a San Francisco street. There are numerous events in which to put your newly learned the line-up. There's enough here to reawaken the interest of fans of the original, whereas newcomers will instantly realise what the fuss was about. It's enough to make grown adults whoop like children. PZ

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P300 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** Horse shit. You'll need a P500, 64Mb of RAM and a decent 3D card

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Two huge cities • Improved control • More cars • More races

DOWNERS Appalling voice acting • Same old

84 More of the same, and therefore great

BALDUR'S GATE II: SHADOWS OF AMN

£34.99 • Interplay • Out now

Two years after the original comes the sequel. New plot, new spells, new character classes. But is it still just more of the same, asks *Andrew Wright*?

In case you've forgotten, *Baldur's Gate* was one of the definitive computer RPGs of recent years and it sold well over a million copies. Now the same developer, Canadian company Bioware, has released the sequel, *Baldur's Gate II: Shadows Of Amn* with an updated graphics engine and a vast number of additional spells, monsters, weapons, magical items and new character classes.

Baldur's Gate fans expecting more of the same are unlikely to be as disappointed as they were with the intermediate release, *Icewind Dale*, but anyone expecting *Baldur's Gate II* to herald a new era in role-playing may as well give up now. *BG II* is simply *BG* with knobs on. Big knobs in places and many more of them, but knobs all the same.

So what's it all about? Well, it's set on the Sword Coast, part of the Forgotten Realms of Dungeons And Dragons fame and you take on the role of the character you played in the original game. If you've kept your character in the form of a saved game, you can import him or her into *BGII*. If you haven't, you simply create a new character but pretend it's the same one, if you see what I mean...

PC ZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

HOT PLOT

It's several months after your battle with the wizard Sarevok and you come round in a prison cell complex underneath the city of Athkatla, where you've been tortured by a nasty fellow called Irenicus. Fortunately, as happens in RPG plots, some assassins are attacking the complex and you're freed by your old friend Imoen from the original *BG*. Close by, you discover more old friends, Jaheira, the fighter druid and mad Minsc, the hamster-loving ranger.

Your task, if you choose to accept it, is to escape through two big levels of demonic dungeon and make it back to the surface. The atmosphere is dark and gloomy, more reminiscent of the brooding world of *Planescape: Torment* than the blissful fairy world of *BG*.

The starting level is 89,000 experience points, which makes you anything from sixth to eighth level, depending on your choice of class. Owners of the *Tales Of The Sword Coast* expansion pack get to start at 161,000 XPs as a bonus. Maximum levels vary from 14th for a druid, 17th for a mage, ranger or paladin to 19th for a fighter, 21st for a cleric and 23rd for a thief, with an XP cap of 2,950,000. This means you can become a pretty powerful character and even own your own stronghold.

IN PERSPECTIVE

Baldur's Gate II might not be as deeply absorbing as *Planescape: Torment*, but it's a big step up from *Icewind Dale* and the original.

Baldur's Gate II

Planescape: Torment

Baldur's Gate

Icewind Dale



A paladin and a fairy join the ranks in this solid sequel.

"The atmosphere is dark and gloomy, more reminiscent of the brooding world of *Planescape* than the blissful fairy world of *BG*"



Part of Athkatl: nice locations and lovely graphics – for a 2D engine...



"I love the smell of fireballs in the morning..."



Saved by a timely sleep spell. Conserve your energy by resting in safe spaces and use spells effectively.



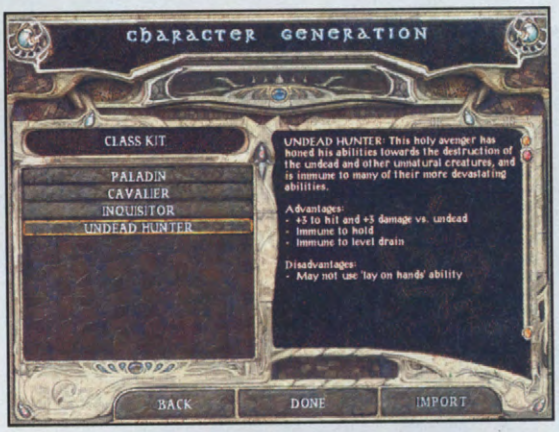
Imoen is taken by the cowled wizards as soon as you escape the cell complex.

KILLER KITS AND CLASSES



BGII's extra character classes and variants add something special to the game. Three new character classes have been added – sorceror, monk and barbarian. Sorcerors are mages that know fewer spells, but can cast them more often. Monks are martial arts types with stealth skills, while barbarians are tough fighters.

All the D&D classes, fighter, thief, mage, cleric, bard, druid, ranger and paladin, have had minor variants added, called 'kits', each with advantages and disadvantages. Thieves can specialise as bounty hunters, assassins or swashbucklers, and fighters as wizard-slayers, swordmasters or berserkers. Clerics can follow one of three gods, good, evil or neutral, and even bards and paladins can specialise further, while mages have up to eight specialist classes.



A paladin can choose to be an undead hunter, a cavalier or an inquisitor. Undead hunters get special bonuses to hit and damage when fighting undead and other unnatural creatures, and they are immune to many of their more devastating abilities, such as hold and level drain. However, they can't use the normal paladin's laying on of hands.

HELLISH SPELLS

The locations to be visited are many and varied, including the Elven forests of Tethyr, the Cloudpeak Mountains, a Drow underground city and even the Abyss, although the main adventure is based around the capital of Amn, Athkatla. There are twice as many monsters as in *BG* – 130 to be precise – and 130 new spells to take the total to over 300. More than you can hope to shake a magic wand at, in fact. New items to be claimed include the Holy Avenger +5 sword and the Staff of the Magi. Oh, and there are now 15 different non-player characters who can join your party – up to a maximum of six, of course.

Monsters include beholders, djinni, elementals, vampires, wraiths, werewolves, golems, spectres and trolls as well as many more spellcasters and other interesting characters to fight. Trolls have to be burned or disintegrated with acid even when they're dead, otherwise they regenerate.

The graphics have definitely been improved,even if they're still not state of the art. And although still resolutely 2D, 3D cards are supported via OpenGL drivers to enhance spell effects and things like mist and shadows. And, you can expand the resolution to 800 x 600 instead of the bog-standard 640 x 480 the original was limited to. Each character and monster avatar now has twice as many animation frames as in *BG* – 280,000 in all – making them look more realistic.

WALKTHROUGH

END

THE GREAT ESCAPE

There is no celebration of victory at the end of *BG*. Instead, you start the sequel in a rat-infested prison cell. Bloody marvellous...



1 The first thing to do is create a character, either importing one from a saved *BG* game file or starting afresh. My advice would be a multi-classed fighter or mage.



2 After the cut-scenes, your old friend Imoen, a useful mage/thief, comes along and lets you out of your cell. Head north-west to the guard room where you'll pick up weapons, armour and the cell key with which to free Jaheira. Minsc will free himself after a short dialogue about hamsters and bending bars.



3 Freeing Jaheira. Things you can open will glow blue when the mouse pointer passes over them – in this case a cell door. Locked items glow green and traps glow red, that's if you've spotted them in time.



4 Gather your party and find the way out. Use Jaheira and Minsc as fighters at the front of the party and keep yourself well-stocked with spells by resting when you're in a safe and cleared room. Here a sleep spell has knocked out a group of goblins, making them easy to kill, while a fire spell is being used against a scary enemy, a mephit.

SPELLING IT OUT

Magic is naturally a key element in the game. At high levels you could eventually have access to 9th-level wizard spells, which are pretty bloody potent – spells such as time stop, gate, resurrection and conjure elemental



Here's the early confrontation with evil dwarves that requires some thought. The ringleader has cast mirror image and the crossbowmen on the flanks are going to do some damage unless they're taken out. Time for a fireball spell, perhaps?



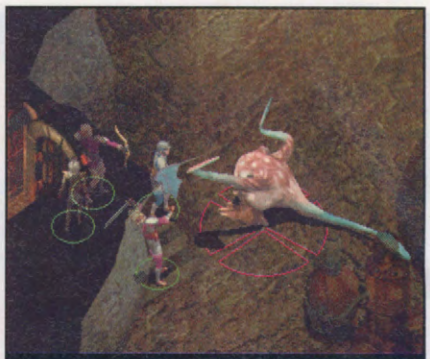
That should knock a few hit points off. The only problem with fireball spells is that it's easy to misjudge it and hurt your own team. But not this time...



You'll find a good number of scrolls in the game and should write as many as possible into one of your party's spell books as they gain you loads of XPs – 3,000 for a third-level spell.



The adventurer's mart in Athkatl – you can buy almost anything here if you've got the readies.



These otyughs are pretty tough – and only damaged by magic weapons and spells.

The game interface has also had a facelift. Perhaps the best feature is the ability to remove all panels and toolbars to display more of the landscape in full-screen mode with a single key press. The inventory has been redesigned from the ground up but, frankly, it's made little difference. It's about as good as it gets anyway.

MEATY CHARACTERS

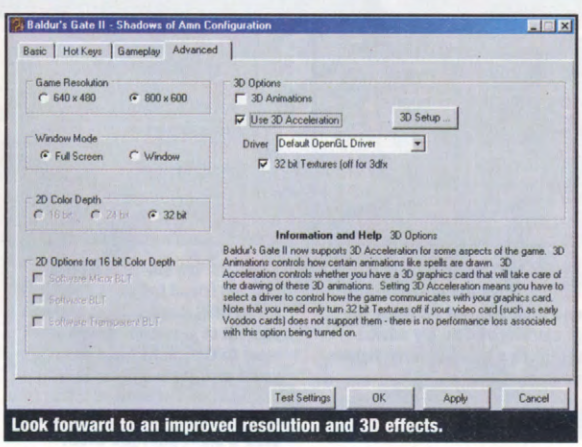
The real meat comes in character development and combat. *BGII* follows the second-edition D&D rules pretty closely, although some things have had to be left out. You can't climb walls or use levitate spells, for example, because of the limitations of the 2D engine.

Combat has been made much more complex and, as a result, considerably more interesting. For instance, there are now up to five levels of proficiency in each weapon for fighter types, but it's also possible to spend weapon proficiency points on different fighting styles, such as the two-handed weapon style and the sword-and-shield style, single-weapon style and double-weapon style. Each gets different hit and damage bonuses or improves your armour class. Coupled with the 20-odd extra 'kits', that expand character development noticeably, *Baldur's Gate II* offers some absorbing customisation opportunities.

Combat in *Baldur's Gate II* is carried out in real time by default, but you really do have to change that. You can pause at any stage by pressing the space bar and then tell each character who to attack and with what. Various game options allow you to set the game to auto-pause when certain conditions occur – enemy sighted, trap found, weapon broken and so on.

Almost as good is the new storyline, which has a lot more depth and characterisation – the NPCs are much more intelligent, with better and more complicated scripts. They're also aware of whatever sex you choose to be. OK, you've only got a choice of two sexes, but you can't have everything. The encounters are much more challenging than in the original *BG* and even on the first level of the game, you're faced with some tough choices. At least they're tough if you've selected normal gameplay – you can make it easier or harder with a choice of five levels of difficulty.

As in *BG*, multiplayer is a bit of a disappointment. In essence, you play co-operatively with up to five other players either over a network or the Internet. Same plot, same everything. Come on guys, let's have some multiplayer maps or something.



Look forward to an improved resolution and 3D effects.

CONCLUSION

Despite the sameness of the 2D engine, albeit with a few little improvements here and there, *Baldur's Gate II: Shadows Of Amn* is a great hack 'n' slay adventure that stretches over five CDs, and it should appeal to all fans of the original who are gasping for more – and anyone like me who was disappointed with *Icewind Dale*.

The plot is much better, the range of characters and equipment is awesome and the whole things looks the business. Bioware reckon there's about 200 to 300 gaming hours in it, including all the sub-plots and quests that you have to carry out to boost your experience. Some of them are tedious fetch-and-carry tasks, but others are a lot more challenging.

Unfortunately, there do seem to be bugs. My first party wasn't able to sleep in the city of Athkatl, even at an inn, for some unfathomable reason. And it crashed frequently when trying to access one particular location. If you can put up with this though, *BGII* is a thoroughly welcome addition to the ageing 2D RPG genre. The next stop has got to be inside the third dimension. PCZ

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** PII 233 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 800Mb hard disk space, Direct X graphics card **WE SAY** Try and double-up if you can

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Gob-smacking range of character types • Dozens of vast locations • Much-improved graphics • hundreds of new spells and magic items

DOWNERS Some alarming bugs have got through • Silly quests are a pain

85 **What more can we say, big name, huge game**

sacrifice™

"Be you a first-person fundamentalist or a RTS radical, Sacrifice will do it for you"
PC GAMER

"Make no mistake this contains some of the most startling 3D visuals that EDGE has seen."
EDGE

"This game could prove to be a multiplayer sensation"
PC STRATEGY GAMES

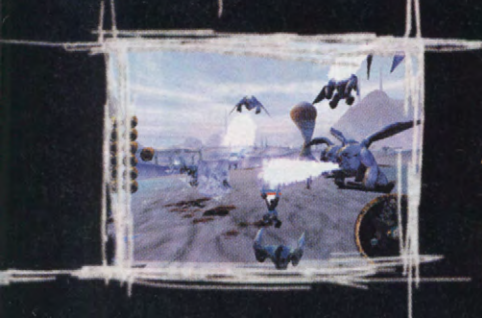
"We're talking cattle-prod-type stunning...it's truly geniunely gorgeous"
PC GAMER

"Best described as a third-person, real-time action-strategy, fantasy themed blood fest"
PC GAMER

"Sacrifice could be this year's Christmas Number One"
PC GAMEPLAY







Play the role of a wizard that battles against other wizards for supremacy. Sacrifice the souls of fallen warriors to your God. In return, he will grant you increasingly more power for you to cast spells to sacrifice more, until finally, you become the ultimate power. This game rewards the quick-witted and deep thought, aggression, treachery and, of course, sacrifice.

- A quasi Real Time Strategy game that combines intense levels of battle action but minimises resource management - you can pick it up and play immediately
- Explore huge 3D landscapes generated in gloriously rich graphics with no fogging
- Hoards of characters with hundreds of individual animations and jaw dropping graphics
- Unique user friendly control system making 90% of the features accessible through the mouse and the cursor keys

GAME OF DISTINCTION 90% PCGAMER Autumn 2000

PC CD ROM

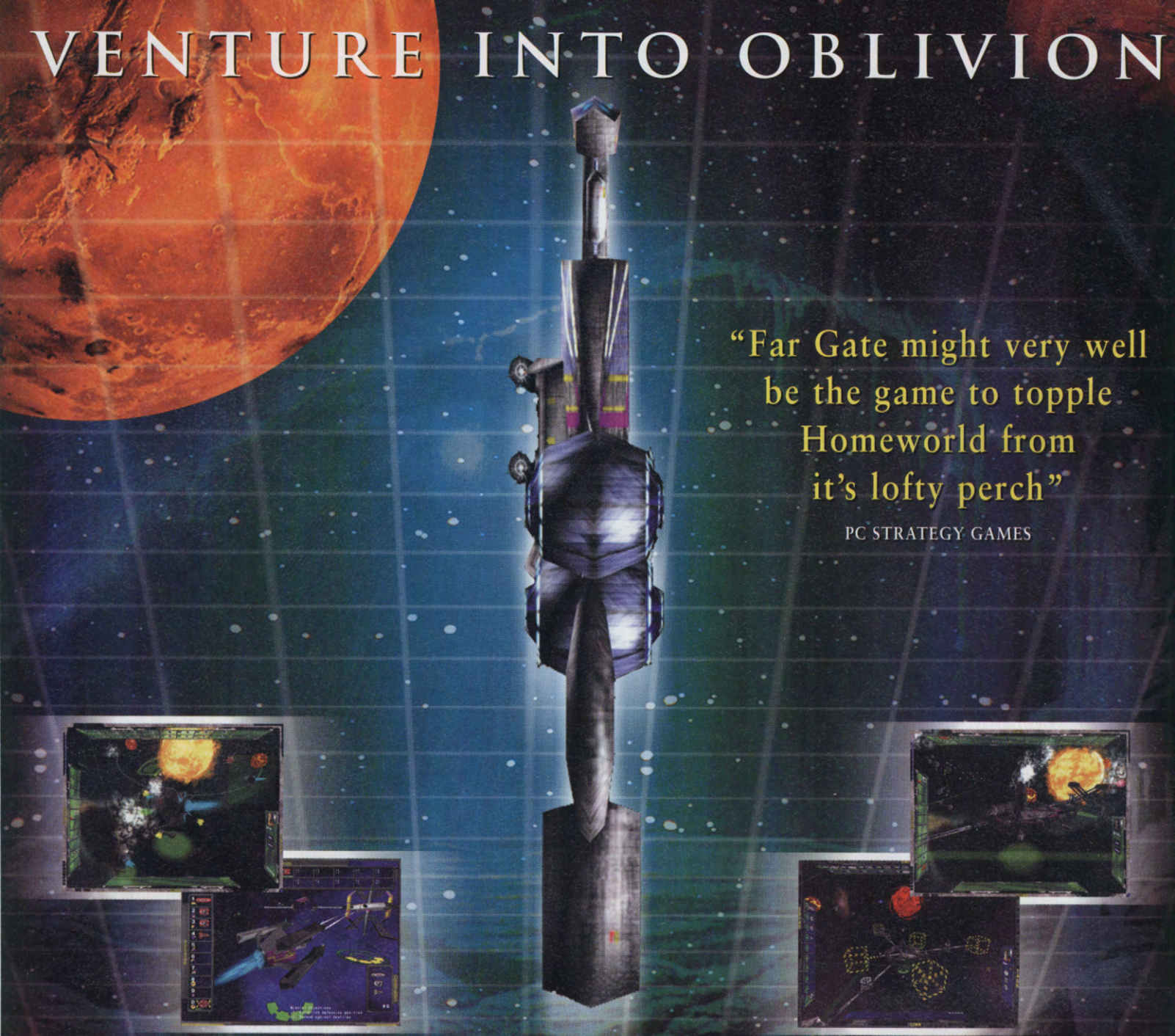
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Interplay

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VENTURE INTO OBLIVION



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WHO WANTS TO BE A MILLIONAIRE

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Are you sure? Is that your final answer? *Dave Woods* isn't really all that bothered either way

It doesn't take much to get the general public foaming at the mouth. A futuristic studio set, a TV presenter with the unique talent of making people soil themselves by raising his eyebrow, lights that dim on demand and a million pound prize that no one will ever win because the questions get unreasonably difficult as soon as the money starts to get serious. "You're three questions away from a million pounds Geoff. Now, what colour underpants was Queen Victoria wearing on the 6th August 1869? Remember, you can still ask the audience."

The game itself needs little explanation. It's basically a pub quiz where the questions get harder as you progress towards the elusive key that unlocks the door to the millionaires club. So there's already one big problem with a PC conversion: pay your £20 for this and you're just adding to Celador's already well-stocked coffers without being given the opportunity to make a withdrawal.

Still, as a parlour game it does the job very nicely. You can only play with a maximum of four players, which seems a bit odd, but then you can choose to play the traditional way, through the rigmarole of Fastest Finger First (the four choices are randomly shuffled and you have to press your buzzer when the correct combination is flashed), with the winner going up to the hotseat on his own. Or, you can play head-to-head, whereby everyone gets a turn, including your more elderly senile relatives.



BONEHEADS

All the lifelines are programmed into the game. The audience responses have been taken from various sources, including the combined brainpower of the *ZONE* office. Don't feel too confident about trusting the answers though, as our main rival was also tapped for knowledge, despite the fact that it's obviously a limited resource down their way. Phone A Friend is amusing as the developers seem to have rounded up the stupidest (and most regionally clichéd) people they could find in a desperate bid to keep you away from the top prize. In one round I got a high-pitched Welsh woman, who proceeded to give me the wrong answer before turning up again a few minutes later to torture Richie.

"The audience responses have been taken from various sources, including the combined brainpower of the *ZONE* office"

MONEY, MONEY, MONEY

And that's about all I can say. It's hard to review a game like this because there isn't really much of a game here. It replicates the *Millionaire* formula, but that's not exactly hard. What hacked me off, and it's likely to do the same to you, is that you can't skip any of the animations, or any of Tarrant's annoying pleasantries. Celador insisted on this in the contract. It also sent out a page of instructions telling us how to spell and style the different elements of the game. Who do they think they are? You'd think they'd just won the race to complete the Human Genome Project, when all they've done is taken a pub quiz, added a pay phone line as an entry fee and splashed it all over our TV screens. Funny how pots of money can make people think they're important.

As a PC quiz, *WWTBAM* is not as funny as *You Don't Know Jack*, and to be honest, despite all the multimedia dribblings that come on the CD you're probably better off finding a cheapo copy of the paperback that was a bestseller last Christmas. Even better, phone the number that flashes up at the end of the TV program. Why play it on your PC when you can play it for real cash? Who Wants To Be A Millionaire? Celador does. A million times over. PCZ

IN PERSPECTIVE

If you want the best quiz game on PC, try and find a copy of *You Don't Know Jack*. *Millionaire* is Christmas fodder.

You Don't Know Jack

Who Wants To Be A Millionaire

Who Wants To Beat Up A Millionaire

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P166 **Memory** 16Mb **WE SAY** P266 and 32Mb, and that's our final answer

PCZ VERDICT

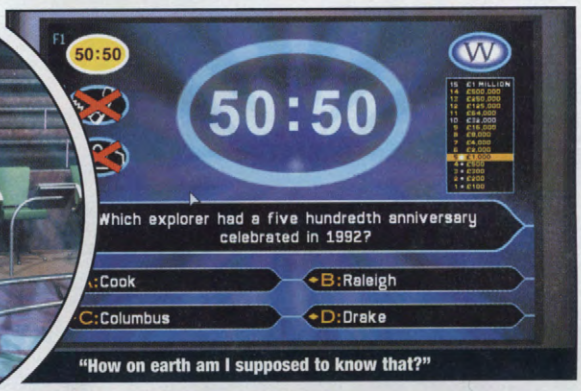
UPPERS Chris Tarrant's voice • Keeps the old 'uns happy at Christmas

DOWNERS Chris Tarrant's voice • You have to listen to every word and watch every animation • You don't win real money • No Internet competitions

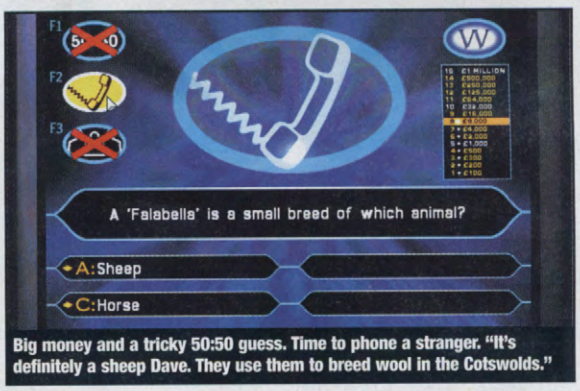
62 That's my final answer



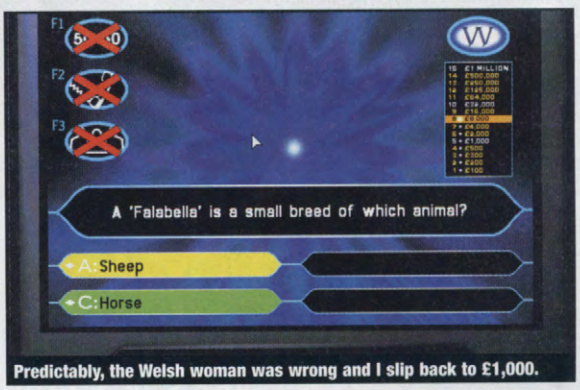
You couldn't make it up. Colin, our freelance crayon, goes out on £100, spluttering: "but it's Secret Squirrel".



"How on earth am I supposed to know that?"



Big money and a tricky 50:50 guess. Time to phone a stranger. "It's definitely a sheep Dave. They use them to breed wool in the Cotswolds."



Predictably, the Welsh woman was wrong and I slip back to £1,000.



Now that can't be right, can it?

"Cultures is a rural version of The Sims" PC Gamer

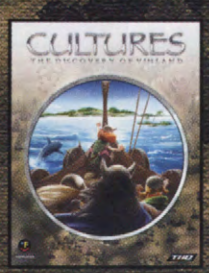
"A perfect balance of strategy and fun" Planet PC



It is 1050. they have landed

on the shores of the americas.

their fate is now in your hands.



available 20th october

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Red sky at night? Then it's time for *Elvis Bacon* to strap on the goggles and head off to work

PCZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

"Treat your kite like your woman: climb into her five times a day and take her to heaven and back." *Black Adder*'s Lord Flashaart would have been instantly at home with *Crimson Skies*, a gloriously indulgent fantasy flight simulation of muscle-bound planes, dastardly baddies and brazen Hollywood starlets.

It's based on a role-playing board game and takes place in a sauced-up cross between the roaring '20s and prohibition '30s where the US has fragmented into bickering, autonomous republics such as the Empire State and the Nation of Hollywood. Zeppelins are the cargo-carrying workhorses in a volatile political landscape, and America's love affair with the automobile has become a plane and pilot fixation.

In this retro world where popular beat combos blast out Big Band and Swing (no, not swing beat) at the drop of an immaculately tailored hat, you play roister doistering Nathan Zachary, leader of a band of airborne pirates. Ahead of you lie daredevil encounters straight out of the pages of a comic book.

'Comic' is key. Before the hardcore simulation brigade raises a flap fixation or rivet-to-weight ratio, this is a playpen for aerial fantasies. A stylised arena designed for the sole purpose of having you win – heroically, of course – as many dogfights with the daftest planes in the shortest possible time. It's less a case of willing suspension of disbelief, more a one-game lynch mob for your credibility.

And fair play to it for that, because the board game heritage rounds out what might otherwise have been a gimmicky airborne blast into a colourful gameworld with a strong storyline and, stone me, a sense of humour.

"If it's in the game, chances are you can fly through it, under it, or shoot chunks off it"

EGOS AT 6 O'CLOCK

From the moment you first drop into action from your base airship, the flak starts flying and the pace rarely lets up. The planes are as fun to fly as they are to look at, with most of the action taking place in 'yer face and at under a 1,000ft. It may not be pushing the boundaries of engine design or flight dynamics but there's little to complain about the performance and visual qualities of the models or landscape engine.

The skies and landscapes are soon crowded with targets and, within the main missions, there are numerous secondary objectives and hidden rewards – from strafing the Hollywood sign to mid-air hijacks of enemy bombers – that would have no place in a conventional simulation. If it's in the game, chances are you can fly through it, under it or shoot chunks off it.

The fact that *Crimson Skies* wants you to win and practically wets itself presenting newspaper cuttings and medals when you do is a large part of its charm. Having the landscape bounce your plane away from all but the most head-on smashes, for instance, is a dead giveaway that the odds are heavily stacked in your favour.

That's fine for the feelgood factor, the catch is that all this instant gratification is, well, pretty damn instant. Novice pilots will take about 20 hours to complete the main story-driven campaign game, while more experienced flyers will find that the game has only the one worthwhile difficulty mode – hard. What replay value there is hinges on whether you buy into the throwaway fun factor in the first place, or fancy some passable multiplayer over a network or via free match-ups on the MS Gaming Zone.

Still, *Crimson Skies* may be a lightweight but it's hard to dislike this high-camp homage to retro thrills 'n' spills for that. Just think Errol Flynn with wings and the weaponry to match. That should give you a fair, and frightening, idea of what to expect. PCZ


That's where you can shove your speed cameras.

IN PERSPECTIVE

It's hard to suggest a comparable alternative to *Crimson*, as camp airborne piracy has not been a major development theme in recent years. For a more po-faced experience (ie a 'proper' simulation) then Microsoft's own *Combat Flight Simulator* is a factual WWII affair with enough detail to satisfy the fanatics, while *Starlancer* is more in keeping with the gung-ho presentation and lowbrow dogfight action. Only it's in space.

Crimson Skies

Combat Flight Simulator

Starlancer

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor Pentium 233 MHz **Memory** 32 Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 3D card **WE SAY** Pentium III/400, 64 Mb RAM, TNT2-class accelerator

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Appealing glam retro game universe • Wild planes and varied missions • Instant rewards

DOWNERS Too easy on all but the highest difficulty settings • Some annoyingly repetitive NPC speech

82 Simulation in 'sense of humour' shock


The serious side of gay airborne piracy.


Don't worry – it's perfectly safe.


Pirates can be good guys, too. Here they escort the Goose to safety.


Hooray for Hollywood, now the world's biggest firing range.


Nathan's need for nicotine knows no bounds.



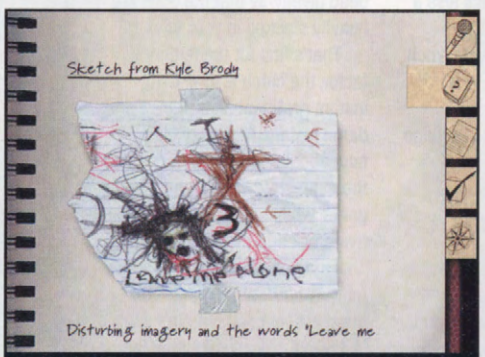
A quick visit to the local diner, and look who's on the menu.



This town is not exactly a place where you're likely to find Jesus.



The local sheriff is not what he appears to be.



Part of your investigation involves finding out information about a small boy who survived.



Graphically, there are bits of the game that could be improved.

BLAIR WITCH VOLUME 1 – RUSTIN PARR

PC ZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

£19.99 • Take 2 Interactive • Out December

IN PERSPECTIVE

Definitely the scariest action/horror game since the early *Alone In The Dark* games and it beats all the *Resident Evil* efforts hands down. The big question is whether the imminent *AITD 4* can do even better.

NOCTURNE

ALONE IN THE DARK TRILOGY

RESIDENT EVIL TRILOGY

DINO CRISIS

BLAIR WITCH VOL 1

Keith Pullin **was recently found sitting in the corner of the room murmering to himself. This is what we managed to decipher...**

If the aim of *Blair Witch Volume 1 – Rustin Parr* is to mimic the disturbing atmosphere of the film, this is the most faithful film tie-in we've ever played.

Without actually copying the plot of the cult hit, developer Terminal Reality has reached into the Blair Witch folklore and taken the player back to the '40s and the horrific murders of seven children by an old hermit named Rustin Parr. The player assumes the role of Elsbeth Holliday, a paranormal investigator who is not too dissimilar in attitude and style to Infogrames' own Edward Carnby. She sets off to find out whether there's more to the murders than meets the eye.

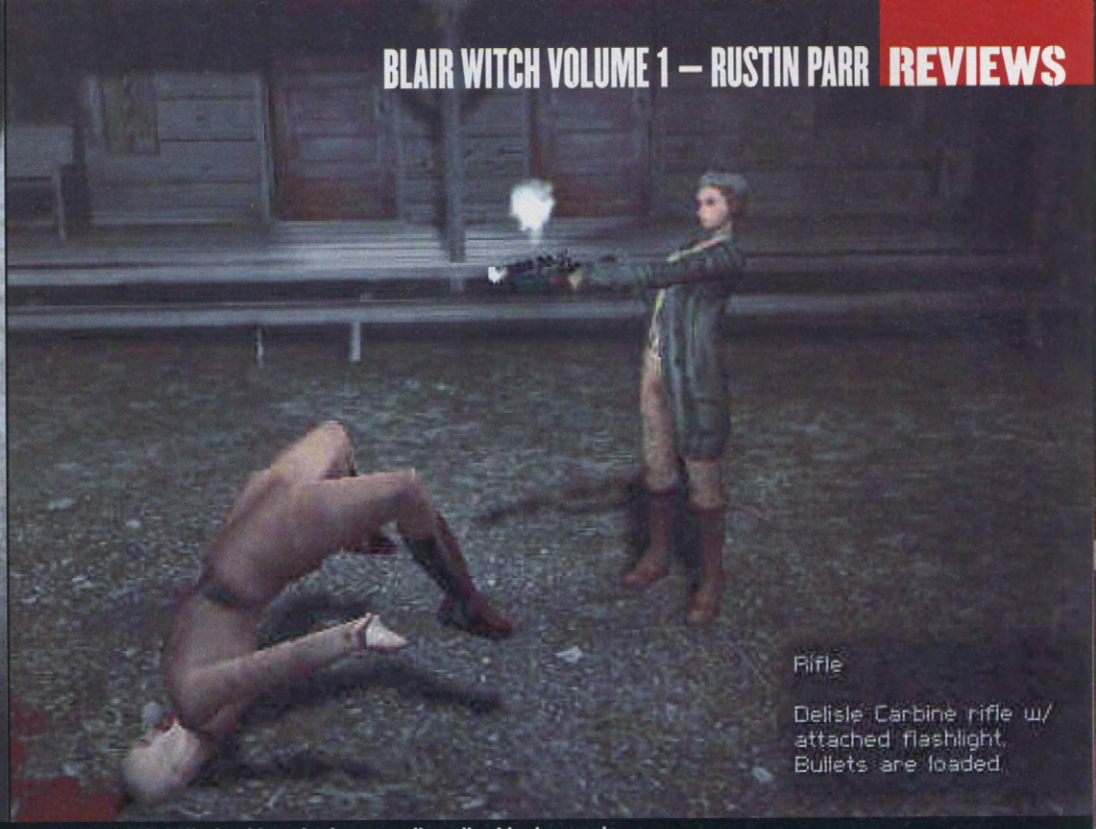
In fairness, the whole game is a blatant *Alone In The Dark* rip-off, using the *Nocturne* game engine – but that's not necessarily a bad point. There are literally dozens of different engines that *could* have been used but, for whatever reason, somebody decided that the *Nocturne* engine would be the one. And credit is due because a better choice could not have been made. Think about it: what if the *Quake III* or *UT* engine had been used? What would we have been left with then? Another poxy, formulaic first-person shooter? The thought is terrifying, but the resulting game probably would not have been.

"The suspense is terrifying, even the training mission inside the haunted house induces the feeling that you are always being watched"

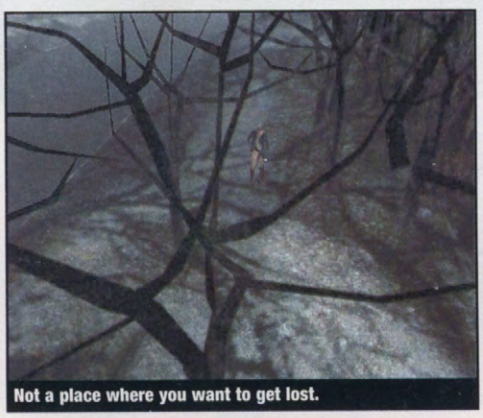
INSPIRED BODGE

So, with an engine that occasionally looks dated in places and a bolted-on plot, you find yourself hooked from the start. Even the training mission inside the haunted house induces the feeling that you are being constantly watched.

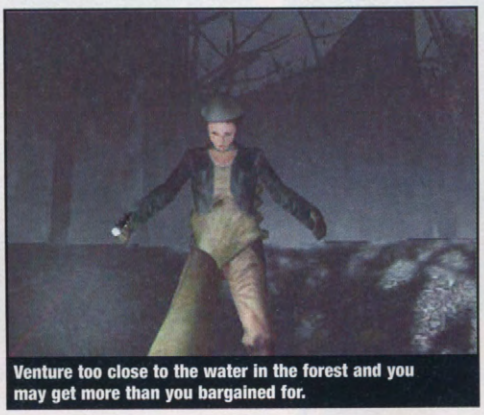




Blasting a zombie in the head to make damn sure it won't get back up again.



Not a place where you want to get lost.



Venture too close to the water in the forest and you may get more than you bargained for.



The first-person perspective night vision is an extremely cool and useful feature.

Ironically, that is what's actually happening. Your superiors look down on you from a glass-fronted gallery analysing each tentative step you make. They offer the odd bit of cautious advice on how to use your weapons, how to control Elsbeth and stuff like that. Generally, though, they look at each other and nod in that knowing and sinister way that is the cue for your immense paranoia to begin. It's all very unnerving, but what's more, with plenty of horrific zombie-like creatures to kill and very limited ammo, this is a seriously challenging training exercise. It's essentially the perfect test for the rigors of what's to come.

Once you reach the town where the murders took place, the graphical style of the game leads to some very frightening and disturbing moments. The excellent use of shadows combined with the superb torch effects creates the illusion of flitting movement all around. In the graveyard, the beam of light scans across gravestones producing long, twisted shadows that play havoc with your brain. You can even switch to a first-person, night-vision view, which is by no means the most graphically impressive thing you're ever likely to see, but the grainy infrared texture is very effective.

You can't help but be affected by the tension. As the game progresses, you feel yourself becoming more and more of a pathetic gibbering wreck. You keep telling yourself: "It's only a game", but for some reason the tingling sensation all down the back of the neck never relents. It's like there's a spider crawling down your spine and whatever you do you can't brush it away.

THE FEAR

The suspense is enhanced with excellent camera direction. The views and angles used in all of the locations have been designed for maximum fright. The eerie sound effects throughout the game add to the tension as well, because, like the film, it's impossible to work out just what these sounds are. Sometimes you can hear what appears to be an odd knocking or cracking sound that changes into an eerie kind of breathing. It's subtle horror, yet highly effective. Ultimately, you just want a monster of any kind to appear because it's the suspense of what could be out there that's most terrifying of all. But at least it's a change from the wave after wave of salivating creatures that are usually thrown at you under the guise of 'horror'.

Blair Witch really does have relatively few enemies to begin with – and for some lovers of the horror/action genre, this might be disappointing. But if you can get into the spirit of the game and spend the early part of it talking to the locals and learning what you can about Mr Parr, the woods and the Blair Witch legends, you soon become gripped.

WHAT MAP?

When you eventually get out into the woods to make some proper investigations the game shifts into top gear and takes psychological torture into a new dimension; the map starts reading wrong, you glimpse sightings of creatures in the distance, and then suddenly, in pitch black, you realise you are lost.

From that point, you need to use your limited ammo wisely. Various monsters start attacking, including large rabid dogs, bizarre creatures made out of twigs and the odd ghostly spectre or two. You can make it back to town after a while and to what seems like safety but, as you'll find out, this game has a habit of knowing when to shove its evil little fangs right back in your face.

So far, so good. Like we said, the atmosphere is so consistent with the film we can't help but give it our full admiration. However, as is always the case, there are elements that could be better. For one, the level of interaction with objects and backgrounds is pathetic – you literally can't pick up or use anything apart from your own weapons. Also, some of the textures on characters' faces are terrible.

But there's no point in dwelling on those kinds of points. The fact is this game is incredibly good fun. *Blair Witch* is really an unforgettable gaming experience for all the right reasons. If you loved the film, you will adore the game. Get it now before it gets you. PCZ

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** PII 350 **Memory** 64Mb RAM, 850Mb HD Space
WE SAY PIII 500 with 128Mb RAM and hardware acceleration

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Incredibly tense and scary • Excellent lighting effects • Fascinating plot • Brilliant camera angles • Wicked use of sound

DOWNERS The textures on faces are poor • Little or no interaction with backgrounds • Slow to get going

86 Frightfully good fun


I give this plane hun out of ten.


One of the many exciting insignias you can design with absolutely no experience.


An explosion in an attic. Yesterday.


The bath comes complete with hostile subs, naturally.


It's nice to get out in the fresh air.


At least there's a nice sense of scale to the game.

AIRFIX DOGFIGHTER

£29.99 • EON Digitial Entertainment • Out now

James Lyon rediscovers an old hobby, but with a new spin and without the mess

Building model planes was never something I got into. Whenever I was caught constructing one, I was forced into a dark cupboard and told to sit with my head between my legs. An activity which, on reflection, probably contained more excitement than glueing pieces of plastic together. Depending on your own point of view, thankfully, or not, *Airfix Dogfighter* contains absolutely no kit building. Although I'm sure fans are certain to rejoice in the pleasure of being able to design their own insignias in a simple paintbrush-style package.

What we've got here is simple miniature arcade flying action set in and around the various rooms of an American-style house. There are 20 missions to play in all, split in half between the Allies, which base their HQ in the boy's upstairs bedroom – and the Axis – located downstairs in the living room. As you complete each mission, new rooms in the house are made available in order to fulfil the primary and secondary objectives given to you (usually shoot something or pick something up).

There's no great strain towards the realism so prevalent in the normal flight-sim world, but the planes still handle well enough. Attacking enemy planes and tanks involves nothing more than getting them locked on target and holding down fire for a few seconds, while later levels allow you to get your hands on more advanced weapons, such as lasers and homing missiles. This may be all well and good, but there's just one problem.

PLANE ANNOYING

Every mission starts at your home base. But to make life easier on yourself and to score points, it's best to begin flying around shooting at the various vases and crockery dotted around in order to get hold of ammo and power-ups. But an enclosed space, however small, isn't exactly the most ideal place to fly around in and most pickups are located close to walls or under furniture – meaning it's best to slow down to collect it. Normally you can't crash if you hit something – unless you fly into it really fast or at a strange angle – bouncing off instead with minor damage, but it can be disorientating if you do. Fly too fast under a bed or a cabinet and the camera can jerk around wildly and you lose your speed and have to accelerate again. So it's all a matter of slowing down and chugging along to get the pickups, then whacking on the acceleration again and leaving a disjointed flow in the action. Not to mention the slowing down to shoot the china in the first place.

Swoop around like this for five minutes and you can get into the action. But if you die, you can imagine the slight irritation in having to go about smashing stuff again in order to get yourself powered-up once more. If you didn't have to do this, the mission would probably be over far more quickly, though it's not exactly the easiest game in the world – getting shot down if faced with a group of enemies is a possibility. Although, on my part, this was usually because I'd slowed down in order to pick something up.

NO CONSOLATION

It's a very limited gaming experience. Aside from the level editor, where you design rooms by rotating and placing pieces of furniture and the obligatory multiplayer mode, that's about all there is to it. If it's any consolation, it isn't quite as bad as the *Army Men* series. But that's not saying much, because even a game involving throwing nails at a satellite dish would be better than *Army Men*. If *Airfix* were looking to sully its image, they could have done a worse job. Instead they've just done a so-so one. PCZ

"There's no great strain towards the realism so prevalent in the normal flight-sim world, but the planes still handle well enough"

IN PERSPECTIVE

If ever there was a series that demanded more vilification than *Army Men*, I can't think of it right now. Meanwhile, *Falcon 4*'s one for the big boys.

Army Men

Army Men 2

Army Men In Space

Falcon 4

Airfix Dogfighter

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII300 **Memory** 64MB RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 3D Card **WE SAY** PIII and you should be sorted

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Good sense of scale • Not too easy

DOWNERS Too much slowing down • Just not exciting enough

59 Simple arcade action that fails to fully take off

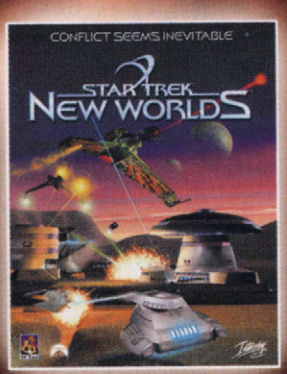
CONFLICT SEEMS INEVITABLE

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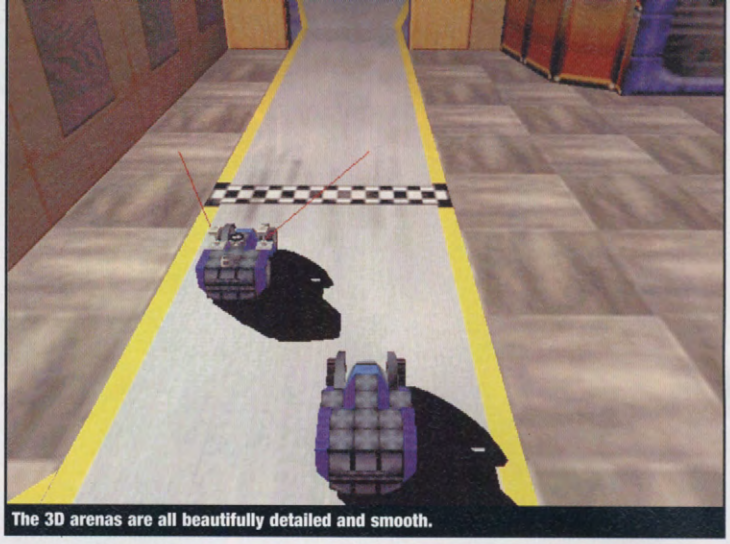
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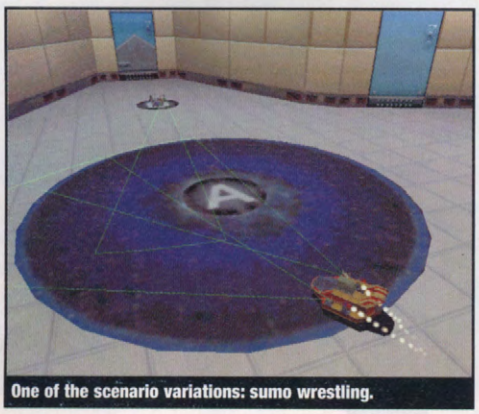
Paramount

PC CD ROM

Interplay

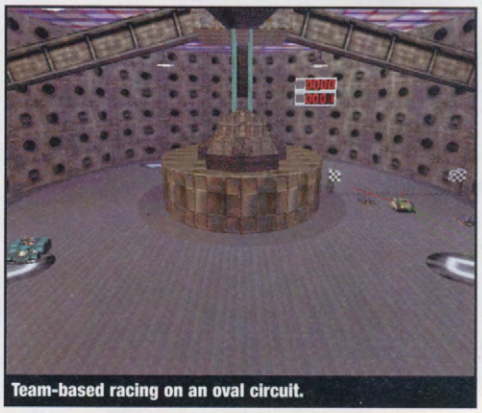

That's my boy!


The 3D arenas are all beautifully detailed and smooth.


One of the scenario variations: sumo wrestling.



Stuffing my bot with toys.


Team-based racing on an oval circuit.

MINDROVER: THE EUROPA PROJECT

£29.99 • CogniToy • Out now

It's a DIY robot kit for Windows. *Phil Wand* digs out his Humbrol paint and poly cement

PC ZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

A long time ago, when everyone wore flares, had silly heavy metal haircuts and smoked a lot of dope, a guy called Stuart B Marks wrote an unusual game for the Commodore Amiga. Called *Omega*, it put you in the role of chief designer at a secret military test facility, where you built tanks that outsmarted computer-controlled opponents. The hook was that you breathed life into your creations by programming them with a rudimentary Artificial Intelligence, in a language somewhat similar to BASIC. Each tank you built became a sort of motorised application, with its every action triggered by variables, sub-routines and loops.

MindRover is an ultra-modern, OpenGL crossbreed of *Omega* and the equally memorable *Incredible Machine* series, the first of which appeared on the PC back in 1995. In essence, you have to construct and program a robot capable of negotiating a string of puzzles and predicaments not too dissimilar from those seen on telly in programs such as *The Adventure Game* or *The Crystal Maze*.

You do all this by designing the basic frame of the vehicle and then adding components that interact with one another. Like *Omega*, the interest lies in the fact that you never actually get to drive the vehicles you make; their every movement stems from the way you've wired them together. But, unlike *Omega*, the programming stage doesn't involve hideously convoluted lines of code, instead taking the form of a graphical, drag and drop representation of cables running inside the robot's shell.

BOTTY BUILDING

The *MindRover* manual – ring-bound to provide some indication of the brainache that lays ahead – is written in an intelligent but accessible style, and makes the game relatively easy to get into. If you dig deep enough you might also discover the tutorial that makes getting into the game even less of a hardship.

Players spend most of the game in 2D mode, where they design, build and wire up their robots. The first two stages involve picking a suitable chassis, much like you would in *Earth 2150*, and then equipping it with components: engine, steering, proximity sensor, machine gun, rocket launchers, even eccentric things such as fireworks and a police siren.

IN PERSPECTIVE

Rivals are limited, but we have fond memories of *Sid And Al's Incredible Toons*, and *MindRover* proves puzzle-based digressions can still work.

OMEGA

INCREDIBLE MACHINE

MINDROVER

SID AND AL'S INCREDIBLE TOONS

FRANKENSTEIN

The last stage is where the components are interconnected and brought to life. For example, if you have a bank of lasers on your robot, you'll need to connect them to a component which actually triggers them. If you want your robot to steer its way around a maze, you'll need to give it electronic eyes so it can sense where the walls are. To be honest, the manual is a bit hazy on wiring but, after creating a dozen or so truly moronic robots, you quickly get the idea of how to make them smarter.

The hydraulically smooth 3D gloss-o-vision is reserved for the actual challenges themselves:

"Every movement stems from the way you've wired the components together"

race around a circuit, navigate a maze, destroy an opponent – that sort of thing. They're all equally involving. On the robots, each component is fully rendered and animated, a feature which breathes real life into your creation and makes its success all the more important.

Rating this sort of game is difficult. For people who love puzzles and have previously bought copies of *Incredible Machine*, *MindRover* will provide hours of satisfying brain straining. For those who like to dabble in Windows programming and logic solving, it'll also be more than adequate. The trouble is, it's hard to recommend the game to the crowds of ADD adolescents who prefer attaining triple-figure heart rates playing stuff like *Quake*. Make of that what you will. PCZ

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P200 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** DirectX 7 compatible 3D graphics card

PCZ VERDICT

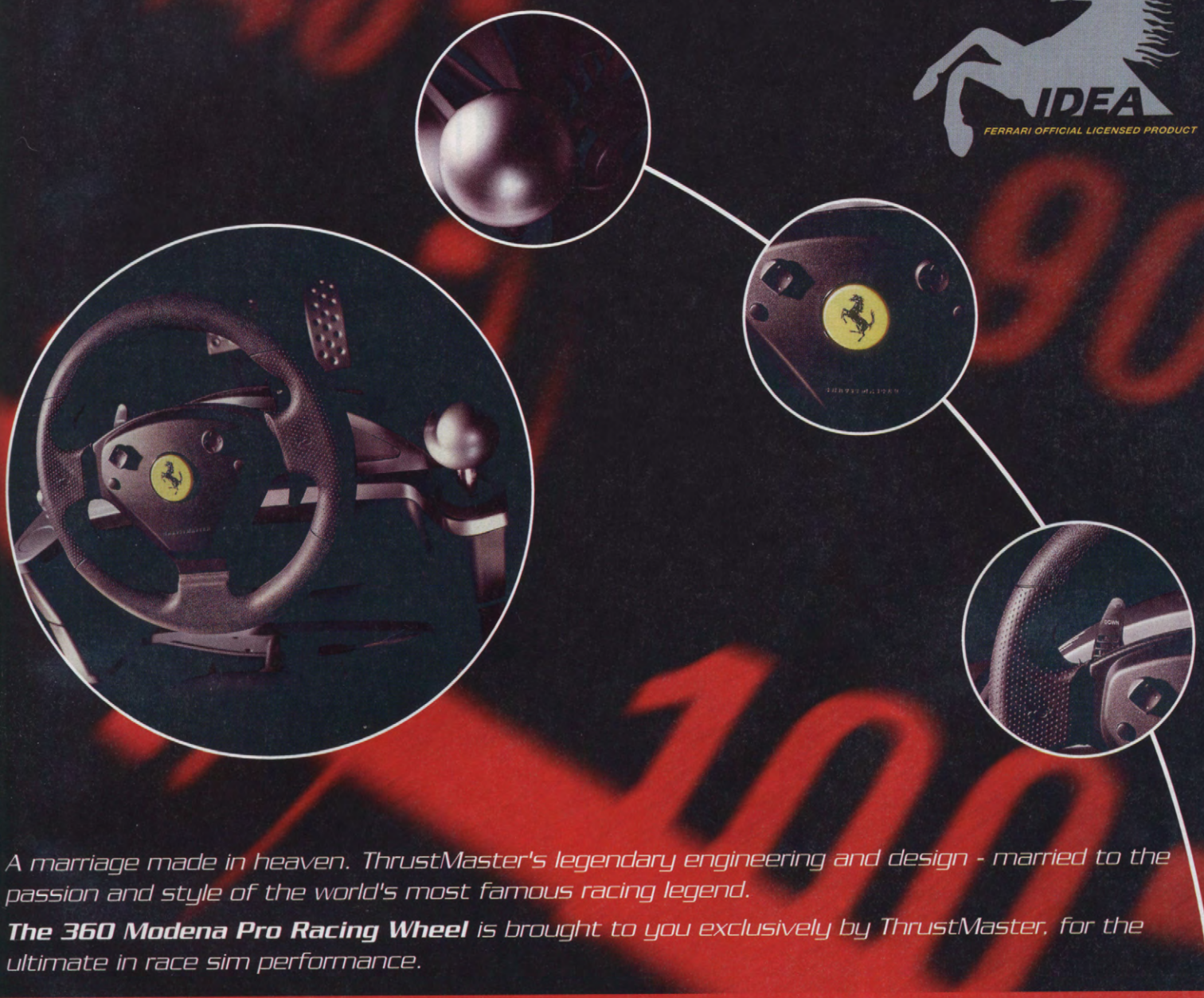
UPPERS Captivating • Unusual and addictive • Makes you use your brain

DOWNERS A real niche game • Rather buggy

80 Heaven for puzzle solvers and wannabe programmers

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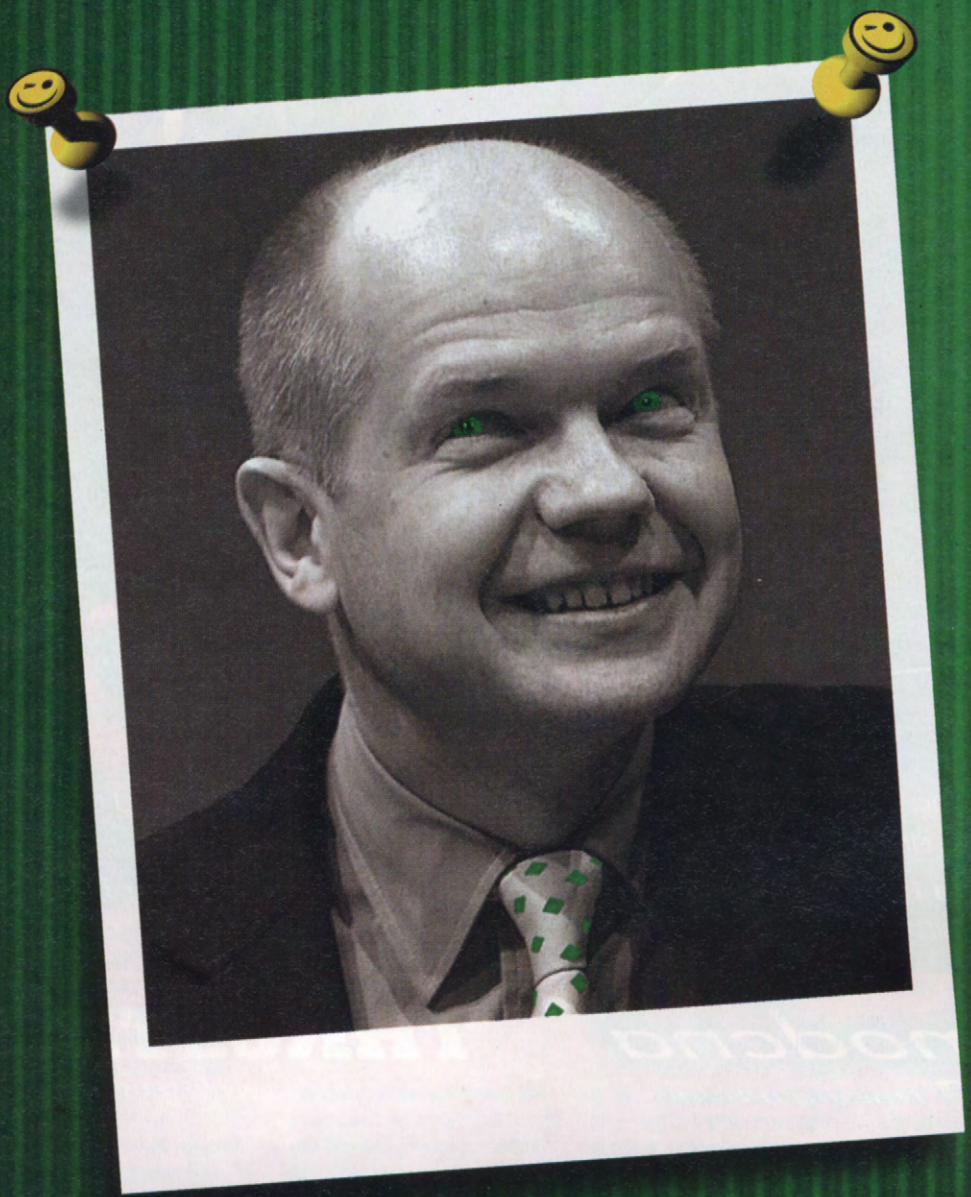
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IN COLD BLOOD

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James Lyon, SITS on chair, TURNS ON computer and types REVIEW GAME. That doesn't work

As we know now, adventure games were never really dead, they were just pupating, ready to burst forth from their cocoons as 3D action adventure butterflies. *Broken Sword* developer, Revolution, is the next gaming caterpillar to hop on the bandwagon, hoping that they can keep up with the times because, well, everybody else is doing it, aren't they?

Set in the near future, *In Cold Blood*'s yet another spy game, with you, the personality-free John Cord, sent to investigate the disappearance of an agent in the fictional Soviet state of Volgia. Of course things could never be that straightforward and you soon uncover the megalomaniacal plans of, Volgia's leader, Nagarov, not known to be the nicest person on the planet. A rather obvious fact since you begin the game in the middle of a tortuous interrogation with the man himself asking the questions. Thus the game unfolds through a series of flashbacks as you relay how you infiltrated several poorly guarded enemy installations before your obligatory capture. Sadly, the flashback structure just doesn't work because of the nature of the plot – if the story keeps going along the lines of "...and then I got shot in the head...oh, no, I didn't..." every 10 minutes or so, it kind of loses its point after a bit.

"Once you've worked out the rules of the game world the rest of it passes along in a metaphorical flash"

BLOODY HELL

As an adventure game, things are really taking a turn for the worst. *ICB* peels yet another layer from the format, whittling the experience into its simplest elements: no more looking at or using more than one or two things in a room, no more than three items in the inventory (excluding your gun, ammo and medikit), and most of all, no difficult puzzles. Admittedly, I did get slightly stuck on the first mission, but once you've worked out the rules of the game world the rest of it passes along in a metaphorical flash. More than 50 per cent of the linear puzzles seem to take the form of using your wristwatch computer on any nearby terminal and pressing 'yes' to questions such as: "Do you want to disable the deadly machine gun?" As for the rest, aside from a clever one at the start, it's mostly the usual problems of ID cards and fuses. Overall, it took me about eight and half hours to get to the end without any real difficulty at all.

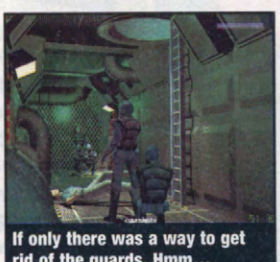
OK, so for adventure lovers, it's a bit of a disappointment, but what about the action side? Yes, you've guessed it, that doesn't deliver the goods either. If you've played any similar game to this, you'll know how the controls handle, ie not very well when running or in a fight. In addition, *ICB* also relies on superficial stealth to get you through, as you're able to walk behind enemies and knock them out (not that they notice you running up to them). It's a component that creates very little tension as the guards are all pretty easy to avoid or shoot down with little trouble.



Not too much of a problem with camera angles



Guards have a convenient habit of facing the wrong way



If only there was a way to get rid of the guards. Hmm...

IN PERSPECTIVE

Grim Fandango is the best adventure game on the PC by a mile. *Metal Gear Solid*'s worth a long look, and if you want scares try *Blair Witch*.

In Cold Blood

Grim Fandango

Metal Gear Solid

Blair Witch Volume One

Good marks to the camera system, though, as there was never a time when I found myself shot at from off-screen.

JACK OF TWO TRADES

Whatever you want to classify the game as, instead of giving us the best of both worlds, *ICB* gives a pale representation of both. It may secretly desire to be the next *Metal Gear Solid*, but it's not half as entertaining or action-packed. It may be attractively cinematic, but as the next generation of adventure game it doesn't make a name for itself. PCZ

TECH SPECS

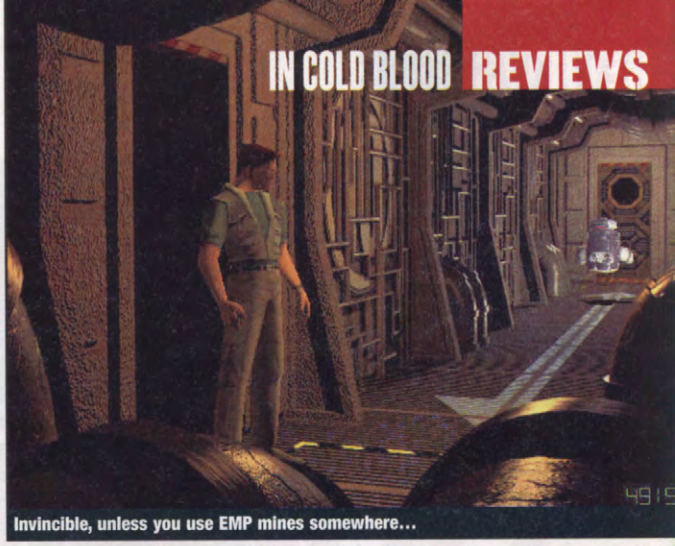
MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P233 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 400Mb HD Space **WE SAY** There's a game stopping bug near the start, so expect a patch soon

PCZ VERDICT

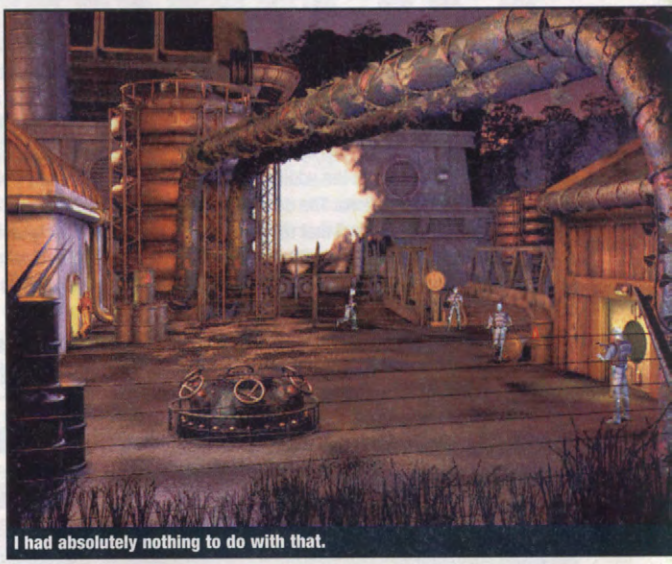
UPPERS Plot on the right side of interesting • Cinematic • Camera angles don't confuse

DOWNERS Too linear • Too easy • Poor action • John Cord: not the most exciting fellow

57 A blending of action and adventure that doesn't quite work



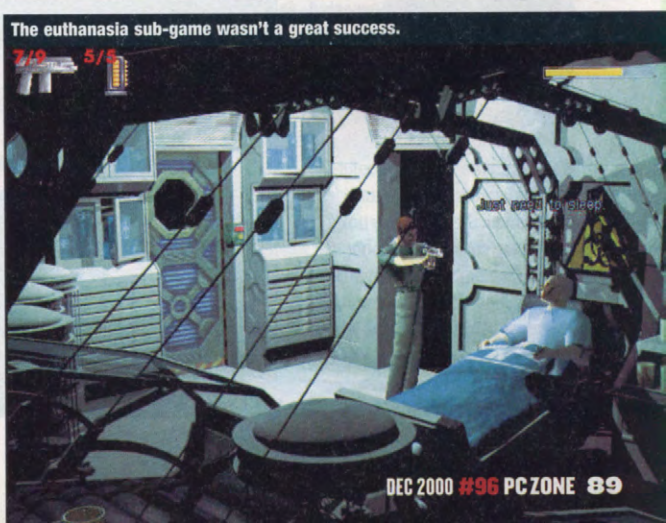
Invincible, unless you use EMP mines somewhere...



I had absolutely nothing to do with that.



Punch out guards to keep them quiet.



The euthanasia sub-game wasn't a great success.

SUPERBIKE 2001

£34.99 • EA Sports • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P300 **Memory** 64Mb RAM
WE SAY P450 with 64Mb RAM and a 3D card

We've said it before and we'll say it again: bike games don't work. A sweeping generalisation, clearly, but the truth is that they don't quite manage to convey the control and immediacy of their four-wheeled counterparts. Simulating a superbike is no mean feat, and, left to your own devices, it's near impossible to stay on the track. In fact, it's no word of a lie that riding an actual superbike is a great deal easier than an unassisted simulation, as so much of it involves the shifting of body weight.

As we've come to expect, this is of course the same game as last year, with the addition of a number of minor modifications. The developers seem to have taken on board the fact that the previous model had a vicious learning curve, and have attempted to remedy this with a number of player aids. Braking and acceleration can be assigned various levels of help, and staying on the track is subsequently far more likely. However, attempting to find the point between a decent challenge and an interactive tour is something of a game in itself. Turn all the aids off and you'll be tossed around like a rag doll at every turn, switch them on and you might as well get a trained orangutan to stand in for you. Consequently, all they've really achieved is the shifting of the learning curve along its axis.

Nevertheless, this is the best superbike game available, and inherent dynamic complications aside, it's an extremely polished affair, blessed with EA Sports' trademark authenticity and slickness. Fans of the sport will lap it up, whereas non-enthusiasts won't buy it.

Steve Hill

PCZVERDICT **69%**


Carl Fogarty celebrates his retirement with a wheelie.


A good start is crucial to avoid the corner slow-down.


Road rage can be unleashed with the time-honoured 'shuffling dice' wrist action.

BIG BROTHER: THE GAME

£9.99 • Infogrames • Out Now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P133 **Memory** 16Mb RAM **WE SAY** Ignore

PCZONE PANTS The *Big Brother* phenomenon has finished sweeping the nation, thank God. When the last portion of grey matter left the house (ie when they ejected Nick for playing the game properly) a fascinating study of underhand tactics and unrequited trust became a fly-on-the-wall student bore-umentary.

But, if you're looking for new depths to sink to, try to find this game in your local bargain bin. Obviously the developers only had a few weeks to string something together, but even the hardened cynics in the *ZONE* office expected more than a couple of slide puzzles (complete it and unlock some low-quality video footage), and a sub-Flash game where you have to catch dishes and groceries. Woeful. Truly woeful, and the fact that Infogrames hasn't stuck the game in a box and is only collecting a tenner shows how embarrassed it is by this unmitigated piece of trash.

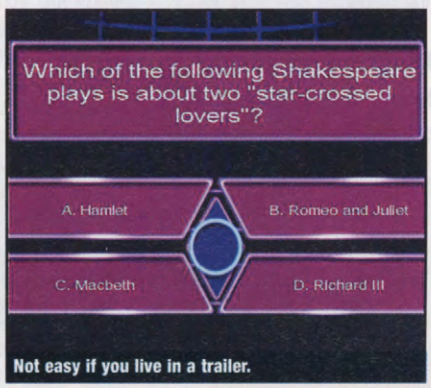
Dave Woods

PCZVERDICT **1%**


No, it's not Moira Stewart it's Mel from *Big Brother*.



Look, a slide puzzle. Yawn.



Not easy if you live in a trailer.


Use the arrow keys to punch your opponent. Or use a hammer to smash up the CD.

WHO WANTS TO BEAT UP A MILLIONAIRE?

£20 • Simon & Schuster • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P133 **Memory** 16Mb RAM **WE SAY** It runs like poo on a 450

PCZONE PANTS We're getting pretty sick of stuff like this. *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?* isn't above reproach, but at least Celador has made its cash by entertaining people. This "hilarious parody" will never entertain anyone, apart from, of course, the publishers and the developers who are cashing in on a *very*, *very*, bad product.

It's not funny, it sounds terrible, plays like a dog and, despite the amateur-grade graphics, runs worse than *Counter-Strike* on a 486. The game – if you can call it that – involves answering questions and selecting an opponent to batter. This tedium is repeated until you're the last man standing.

Even the basics are beyond the developers. As soon as the question is asked, and before the multiple choices are displayed, you can buzz in and you're then given all four options to choose from. And, as the questions are ridiculously easy, the game descends into a battle as to who can register a button press first. And for that sort of entertainment you really don't have to spend any money.

Dave Woods

PCZVERDICT **4%**

FORT BOYARD: THE QUEST

Microids • £34.99 • Out now


Slightly more complex than the 70s version.

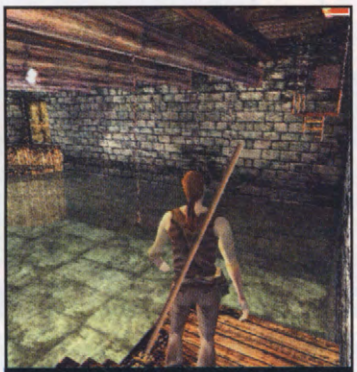

No men went to mow, went to mow a meadow.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P200 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** Don't even go there

According to the front of the box, which has Melinda Messenger displaying just enough cleavage to make you look twice, *Fort Boyard: The Quest* is "an all action adventure based on the hit TV series". Now, we're not quite sure who makes these bold claims, but we've seen enough of them to know they can't be trusted. So, after hours of deliberation, the *ZONE* team was unsurprised to find that it contains no less than two distinct errors – concerning the phrases "all-action adventure" and "hit TV series". Work it out for yourself.

Curiously, *The Quest* has very little to do with the "hit TV series", and totally abandons the game show format in favour of a heavily-influenced *Tomb Raider*-style adventure. Of course, such a game normally requires an intuitive control system, to which the developers have given a wide berth in this case, and the puzzles


There's no sign of Melinda. Let's go home.

are as obvious as they are easy to complete, with only the aforementioned control system providing any degree of difficulty. So, to summarise, this game is marginally more shit than the TV show.

Carlos Ruiz

PCZ VERDICT 25%

FROGGER 2

Hasbro • £19.99 • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P233 **Memory** 32MB **WE SAY** No problems

Are you old enough to remember the original arcade game, complete with vehicular obstacles, lilly pads and crocodiles that can't keep their mouths shut? One of the original powerhouses, it was simple (guide a frog across the road and river) and yet perfect in its own way. If so (or even if you're curious to see what your parents used to play), you might want to check out one of the arcade emulators that's doing the rounds on the Internet, or this, the 3D Hasbro update that actually retains a lot of the charm of the original.

It's exactly as you'd expect, with similar gameplay spiced up with a few tales of the unexpected, like the huge boulder dash, and some dizzyingly high 3D graphics. Perfect for kids and well worth 10 minutes of your day at work, *Frogger 2* is a reasonable arcade/platform blast. The developers have managed to avoid most of the camera nightmares that usually affect games of this type and there's even a multiplayer option, which your forefathers never had access to.

Dave Woods

PCZ VERDICT 61%

PANZER GENERAL III: SCORCHED EARTH

£29.99 • SSI • Out now

TECH SPECS

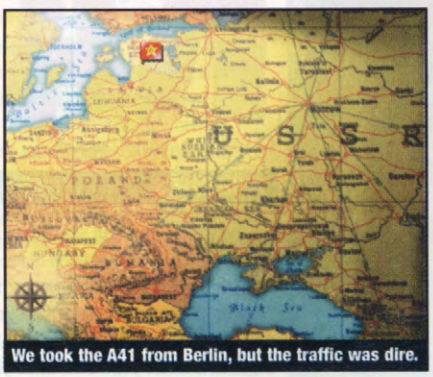
MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** PII 233 **Memory** 8Mb RAM **WE SAY** Up it to a PIII 450 and you'll be fine

There has been an alarming trend recently to release what amounts to an add-on pack, repackage it and try to convince the public it's a new version. Although *Panzer General* doesn't do this, it comes very close.

The original *Panzer General 3D* broke all the rules for turn-based hex games. Great graphics, full 3D views and above all, no hexes. Set on the Western Front, it put you in control of either the Allies or the Axis, in battles ranging from Africa to a hypothetical German invasion of Washington. Any game that means you can send Stukas over the White House has got to be good.

So along comes *PGIII: Scorched Earth*. Is there a new engine? No. Have the graphics been updated? No. It's basically the original PG. The German units are unchanged from its predecessor and, although the Russian units are well modelled and very pretty, it still feels like you're playing the first version.

Now the old adage "If it aint broke, don't fix it" springs to mind and, in that respect, SSI should be given credit. But seeing as they either forgot – or avoided – putting the Western campaigns on, it kind of ruins the moment. Sure, you can still play multiplayer games with either the German, British,



We took the A41 from Berlin, but the traffic was dire.


Despite the Russians best efforts, the Germans still got to the beach first.

Russian or American units, but it would have been nice to see the imagination that was used in some of the *PG3D* scenarios being put to good use here.

For example, Patton wanted to attack Russia after the defeat of Germany. There are the units in the game, America Vs USSR 1945, and all it would have taken is a bit of lateral thinking. Sadly the game is devoid of that… Pretty good, but definitely not exciting in any shape of the word.

Daniel Emery

PCZ VERDICT 64%


So this is where Esso got the idea…

CULTURES

£29.99 • THQ • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** PII 266 **Memory** 32Mb **WE SAY** PII 400 with 64Mb RAM

Bearing rather an unsubtle similarity to the *Settlers* games, *Cultures* puts you in charge of a tribe of Vikings, which you must guide round the globe in a quest to uncover twelve parts of a comet. Along the way, you'll have to collect resources, build villages, create industries, raise armies, trade and see to the happiness of each individual in your tribe, such as making sure that they find a suitable bedmate. You'll also have to give each Viking an occupation, and the more they use their skills, the more skillful they'll become.

It's a massive challenge to make all parts of your tribe run smoothly, as you need to keep a watchful eye on food, building materials, religion, entertainment and defence. Occasionally it can all get a bit much, especially later on when villages and populations start expanding. It's a shame that there isn't a clearer and more versatile menu system, as the one provided is a tad clunky.

Unlike most of the strategy drivel that trickles through the *PC ZONE* offices, *Cultures* really will test you to your limits. You'll even have to plan where to place certain buildings so that your tribe can run as efficiently as possible, such as building a hunting lodge near to both a forest and your storage facility, so that your hunters can gather and drop off food as quickly as possible.

Although many of you will be put off by its complex gameplay, *Cultures* is well balanced, hugely challenging and entertaining. If you're into *Settlers* or you just like the idea of micro managing some sweet little cartoony characters, *Cultures* is well worth the effort.

Martin Korda

PCZVERDICT **72%**



Biggest fridge I've ever seen.



Korda's affinity with camping made him ideal for this.



Sail the seas in search of 12 parts of a comet? It's tempting, but I think I'll pass thanks.



It's a burning car.



Why didn't they just call it Car Wars?

ROAD WARS

£19.99 • Virgin • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P200 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** P400 with 64Mb RAM and a 3D card

Heavily armed vehicles, shooting the crap out of each other while racing around generic areas. Or, as the manual would have it, "the most insane racing sport ever created!" Stylistically falling somewhere between ITV's *Renegade* and low-grade soft porn, it may come as no surprise to learn that the game is of German origin.

Subtlety is not *Road Wars*' key attribute, from the bombardment of heavy metal music to the frenzied action. Even when other vehicles aren't attempting to blow you off the road, trackside robots launch further artillery in your direction. As such, finishing a race is something of a feat, although the rewards are tangible, as prize money makes upgrades, including an air filter, a camshaft, and an intake manifold.

You lucky, lucky people. It is almost playable for an hour or so, but buying it would represent an extraordinary decision.

Steve Hill

PCZVERDICT **42%**

KA'ROO

£19.99 • Virgin • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P200 **Memory** 32Mb RAM, 100Mb HD space **WE SAY** Yeah, I suppose so

They've gone and missed out the middle bit, which is kind of appropriate as 'ngar' is the kind of noise you make when you fall off the edge of a platform for the hundredth time in this 3D-puzzle game. Stop me if you've heard this one: collect crystals to open the exit, avoid the roaming bad guys, use bombs to clear blocked passages, teleport to different locations… even the main character's a boxing glove-wearing kangaroo called Joey, for goodness sake.

It's all that spread over 80 levels, which get ever so slightly harder each time. But not that hard that it's impossible to finish off in a lazy afternoon. It's more of a tabloid crossword puzzle of a game, the kind you might find stuck on a shareware CD, albeit with better graphics (ignoring what the box laughingly describes as 'incredibly realistic landscapes'). Nice but, on the whole, quite forgettable.

James Lyon

PCZVERDICT **37%**



The final level. See you here soon.


This room is extremely functional, not created for a screenshot at all.


Learn to play the guitar. No, really. It's more fun.


Creating an exact replica of the *ZONE* office is all too easy.

THE SIMS: LIVIN' IT UP

£19.99 • EA • Out Now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P233 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** 64Mb RAM for smoother gameplay

The first *Sims* add-on pack couldn't have arrived at a better time, commercially at least – appearing right in the middle of the *Big Brother* craze, right after the original game has made a chart comeback. *Livin' It Up* is bound to become a massive success. Whether it deserves to be is another matter. *The Sims* received widespread critical acclaim when it first came out last year, and many a hardened gamer trotted off to the shops and got hooked for a couple of days to the irrelevant lives of the baby-talking, floor-wetting, groin-clouded artificial creatures.

The problem is that after a week or so of intensive play, almost everybody, ourselves included, had had enough of seeing to the Sims' every whim. Their perpetual need for food, sleep and social interaction makes for engrossing play for a while, but after that you've just had enough.

The reason *The Sims* is still going strong is that it's one of the few games non-gamers buy and play with wild abandon. It'll be the same people who buy *Livin' It Up*.

There are five new career paths, retro and medieval buildings and even alien visitations. But for someone who has already had enough *Sims* to last a lifetime, *Livin' It Up* added half an hour's worth of entertainment.

That being the case, we'd recommend it only for those who are still playing the original regularly, but have grown a bit tired of the same designs and fashions. Anyone who uses this game to recreate the people – and I use the term in the loosest, most vacuous way – from *Big Brother* has serious problems.

Mark Hill

PCZ VERDICT **63%**

X-TENSION

£9.99 • THQ • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P233 **Memory** 32MB RAM **ALSO REQUIRED** Direct3D compatible 3D card and full copy of *X-BTF* **WE SAY** PII-350 would be better

PCZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

The great thing about reviewing expansion packs is that it's only ever the people who acquired and enjoyed the original game that buy them – obvious really. *X-Tension*, by default, need only be bought by those who enjoyed *X-Beyond The Frontier*. For them, it is nothing short of essential.

In essence, *X-Tension* is more of a sequel than a simple add-on. The story kicks off from the end of the original game, the evil Xenon vanquished and you still stranded light years from home. With time to kill and your X-perimental ship being stripped apart and rebuilt, you are given an Argon Buster with a few bits of kit bolted on to help you on your way and, from there, it is up to you where you want to go, what to trade in and who to pick on.

Having only one ship to fly in *X-BTF* was limiting, but here, 30 are available, from small fighters to medium-sized traders and freighters. You can even slip into a space suit and go floating into space – useful for when you want to take over other ships.

Although there is more freedom to roam in *X-Tension*, with countless missions compared to *X-BTF*'s meager handful, there is little continuity between them. So, in this respect, developer Egosoft seems to have gone from one extreme to the other. New missions are being created as we speak and will be released on a regular basis. Hopefully, we can expect some complex quests fairly soon. Again, there is an emphasis on building up your own network of factories and space fleets, but there is more freedom to engage in mindless combat and go exploring.

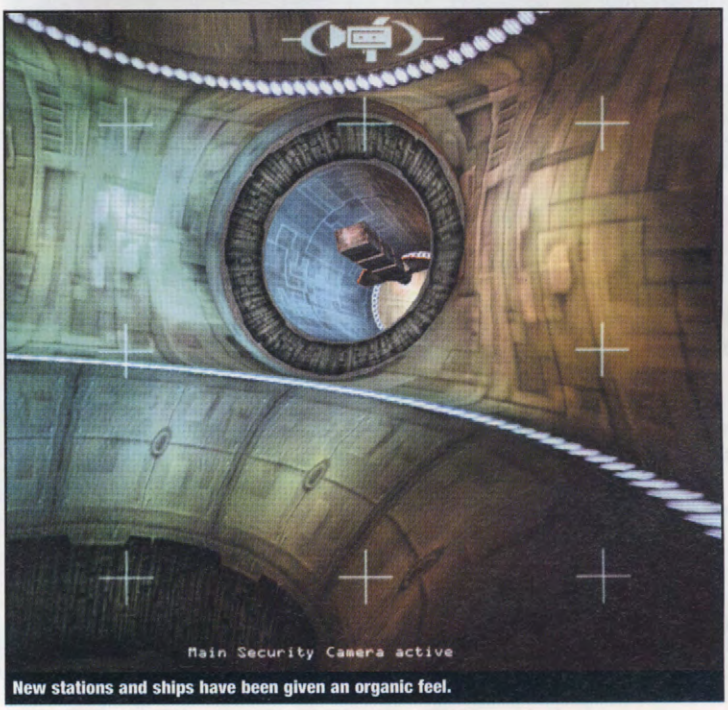
Graphically, *X-Tension* is prettier, the interface is improved and the soundtrack – an acquired taste – has been extended. Aside from the odd bug, *X-Tension* is a fantastic addition to a superb game. Half the price of most add-ons and with twice as much content, it's refreshing to experience a change of pace and see the series edge in a new direction. If Egosoft can see their way to injecting more aspects away from the economic side of things, we should be on for a cracking sequel, whenever – or if ever – it appears.

Richie Shoemaker

PCZ VERDICT **83%**


X-Ceptional.


Look after your factories in other systems.



New stations and ships have been given an organic feel.

BUDGET ZONE

Only get 30p pocket money a week? Resent paying £40 for a game? Fear not, we bring you a rundown of the latest games to come out at a price you can afford

PINCHING THE PENNIES Martin Korda

TOMB RAIDER

£4.99 • Sold Out • Out now

BEST BUY

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P60 **Memory** 8Mb RAM
WE SAY We recommend a P90

It's only when you've loaded it up that you realise just how much the original *Tomb Raider* has aged. It feels like only yesterday that everyone's favourite heroine sprang onto our monitors, wearing little else than the two pistols she was armed with. If for some reason you missed it first time round, then here's your chance to sample Lara's first computer game outing, for less than the price of your average cinema ticket.

Hired to find an ancient artefact called the Scion, you must navigate Lara safely through a series of missions, which will test your dexterity to the max. There are plenty of puzzles to keep you thinking as well as a constant stream of enemies to gun down. In fact, it's the puzzles that make this such a great game to play, even though the graphics look atrocious when compared to the more recent *TR* offerings. As ever there's a fair amount of reloading and frustration when trying to achieve certain jumps, but that's what these games are all about, and once you've mastered the controls you'll realise just how rewarding the whole experience can be.

It may not look that great, but the T-Rex level still has the power to shock and it's still a hugely gripping game, and at the end of the day it's an action/adventure, which in terms of gameplay can still compete with the best of them.

PCZ VERDICT 78%



I bet she's a bit chilly in that little number.



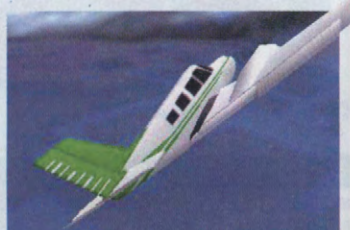
I can't bear to watch. Ha ha.



I just know that this is going to go horribly wrong.



Flying without shooting things isn't as boring as it seems. Honest.



Up, up and awaaaaay!

FLIGHT UNLIMITED 2

£4.99 • Sold Out • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P120 **Memory** 16Mb RAM **WE SAY** Runs better with 32Mb RAM

Even though it's slightly more constricting than the likes of *Microsoft Flight Simulator 2000*, *FU2* is worth picking up if you're an avid flight sim fan. Every aspect of flying has been accurately recreated, and you'll have to contend with varying weather conditions, as well as turbulence and hundreds of other planes. The scenery and landmarks are two of its most impressive features and you can also navigate your planes by following the roads below.

If you're really into combat-based flight sims, then *FU2* probably isn't for you, but if you're into relaxing and accurate flying games, then check this out. And even if you're not a huge fan of the genre, there are worse things you can do with a fiver, you never know, you might even find that making your way from A to B is actually more fun than you imagine.

PCZ VERDICT 70%



"I told you we'd stand out if we wore the pink cammo."



Stealth and cunning will get you everywhere in *Spec Ops*.

SPEC OPS: RANGER ASSAULT

£4.99 • Sold Out • Out now (Free download from www.freeloader.com)

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P166 **Memory** 16Mb RAM **WE SAY** Runs better with 32Mb RAM and a 3D card

When *Spec Ops: Ranger Assault* was released almost two years ago, it was considered to be groundbreaking. However, when you compare it to the likes of *Rogue Spear* and *Counter-Strike*, you start to realise just how dated it's become.

Taking control of a two-man special forces unit, you must sneak and fight your way through a series of missions, which include hostage rescues and assassinations. Although its poor visuals are somewhat off-putting, the gameplay is tense, and if you're new to this genre, then this is the ideal place to start. Cheap and simple, but still plenty fun.

PCZ VERDICT 68%



"And for my next trick..."

MIGHT AND MAGIC VI

£4.99 • Sold Out • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P90 **Memory** 16Mb RAM **WE SAY** It doesn't need much more than this

Back in our October issue, we gave *Might & Magic VIII* a rather unimpressive nine per cent, one of the main reasons being that it's not a great deal different to all of the previous titles in the series. *M&MVI* looks, plays and feels just like *M&MVIII*, although it does vary slightly story-line wise. Create a party of four adventurers, customise them to your liking and then set off on a quest to save the world from evil. Along the way you'll have to complete sub quests, converse with uninteresting and unvaried NPCs and generally fight back the urge to fall asleep. If you're a fan of the series and you're wondering whether to buy this or *M&MVIII*, buy this. It's the same kind of thing, only £25 cheaper.

PCZVERDICT **19%**

WORMS & REINFORCEMENTS UNITED

£4.99 • Sold Out • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** 486 SX/25MHz **Memory** 8Mb RAM **WE SAY** Runs better on a 486 DX

A couple of months ago, Sold Out tried to con us by releasing the *Worms* add-on pack, *Reinforcements*, for a fiver, failing to mention on the packaging that you actually needed the original game to run it. Since then, they seem to have wisened up to the fact that us gamers aren't a complete bunch of brainless primates who'll fork out a fiver for anything, and have bundled the two together for, you've guessed it, five quid.

If you don't own *Worms Armageddon*, and you're wondering what the fuss was all about, then this package is worth a look.

PCZVERDICT **59%**



Oh dear, as soon as he's under pressure, he just goes to pieces.

GRAND THEFT AUTO

£4.99 • Sold Out • Out now (Free download from www.freeloader.com)

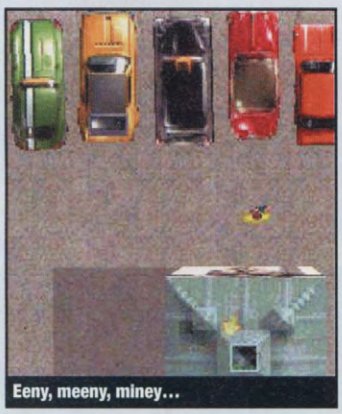
TECH SPECS

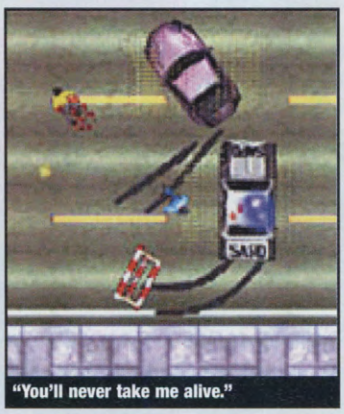
MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** 486 DX4/100MHz **Memory** 16Mb RAM **WE SAY** That's OK

Preferred by many to the sequel, *GTA*'s glamorisation of violence and crime caused quite a stir in some of the holier than thou tabloids when it first made an appearance on the shelves. For the rest of us though, it was the perfect chance to indulge in some of our delinquent fantasies without receiving a fine drubbing from the coppers.

For those of you who don't already know (hopefully that's not many of you), *GTA* is a top-down crime simulation (of sorts), where you must make your way round a city, indulging in criminal activity while not getting caught. It's the game's little touches that make it so appealing, like being able to pull drivers out of their cars, beat them up and steal their vehicles. A classic in its time, and still a superb laugh, if you don't already own it, then this is the perfect time to pick one up.

PCZVERDICT **77%**


Eeny, meeny, miney...


"You'll never take me alive."


The graphics are OK with a 3D card, but without one they're just rubbish.

SPORTS CAR GT

£9.99 •EA Classics • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P166 **Memory** 16Mb RAM **WE SAY** A 3D card and wheel are pretty much essential

A game that promises much, but somehow falls flat on its arse, *Sports Car GT* is a racer that could be really great if it wasn't for its dodgy car physics. Using a steering wheel is just about OK, but it's almost unplayable with a joystick.

There are plenty of cars for you to choose from, and there's just about enough variation between them to keep things interesting. Graphically it's relatively sound, but never amazing, with crappy pop up all over the place. If you haven't got a 3D card then be prepared to be unimpressed, as the graphics are dire.

Basically, if you're not a GT lover, or if you haven't got a 3D card yet then just don't bother with *Sports Car GT*. However, if you have a good PC and access to a steering wheel, you should find this a relatively enjoyable GT racing sim.

PCZVERDICT **54%**

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PC ZONE



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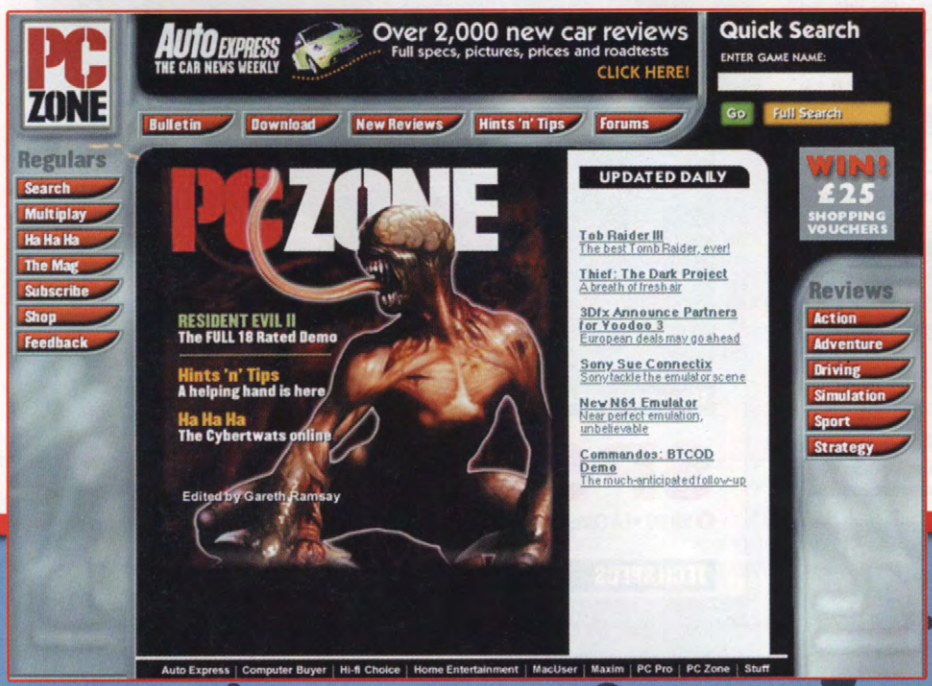


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www.pczone.co.uk

FEEDBACK

This month sees many of you airing your views on two of the biggest games of the year. *Martin Korda* listens to what you have to say



IT'S YOUR SHOUT!

Feedback is here to offer you, the player, a platform to voice your opinions on any of the games reviewed in *PC ZONE* over the last three months. Whether you want to sing a game's praises or simply give it a verbal beating, we want to hear from you. Remember to keep your comments between 50 and 150 words and include your name, address and age.

WRITE TO Feedback, ***PC ZONE***, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1P 5FF

EMAIL Alternatively, email them to us at **letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk** with **'Feedback'** in the subject line.

"*Deus Ex* is surely one of the most involving and realistic games I've ever played, and I think it's even better than *Half-Life*"

SAM WILSON, WHO SEEMS TO RATHER LIKE *DEUS EX*

VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE - REDEMPTION

REVIEWED Issue 92, *PCZ* August
SCORE 90%

What we thought

PC ZONE CLASSIC

"The *Masquerade* world is so absorbing that you don't want to leave it, its shapes and contours so exquisite you can't keep your eyes off it, its battles so demanding, you can't stop rising to the challenge, its dark vampiric powers so alluring you are hypnotised and vulnerable, lost in a trance as it drains your life away."

What you said

Having played *Vampire* all the way through, I would say that the game is quite good. The graphics are fantastic, the combat interface is easy to control and the storyline is genuinely interesting. Although, admittedly, the plot is a little too linear and occasionally the AI is somewhat suspect but, despite these failings, it's still a superb RPG. But it's not quite up to *Deus Ex*'s standards. I wouldn't call it a Classic, but it definitely deserves an Award For Excellence in my book.

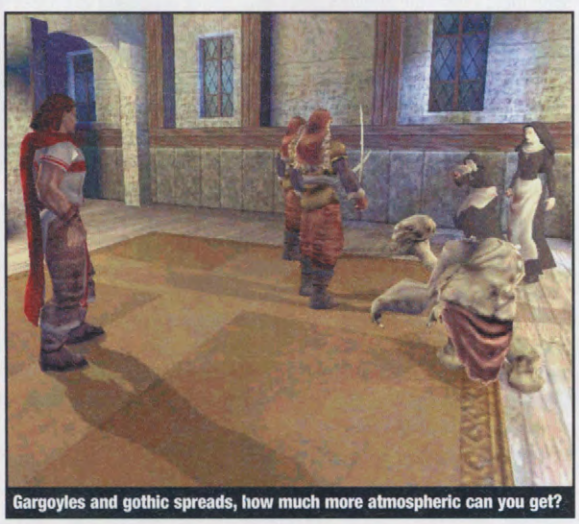
Simon Wilson

I've been an avid reader of your magazine for quite some time now and I generally find your reviews to be pretty accurate. Being a huge RPG fan, I thought that I'd invest in a copy of *Vampire*. True to your review, I wasn't disappointed. Never before have I seen such luscious graphics, while the gameplay is truly amazing. The only criticism I have, is that, while the plot is engrossing, it's far too linear. It's a shame because, if it had a branching storyline, it would surely have been the best RPG of all time.

Paul Cater

COMMENT

As we stated in our review, *Vampire* suffers slightly from a linear storyline. Apart from this, there weren't many other major criticisms that we could level at it. Sure, *System Shock 2* and *Deus Ex* are undoubtedly superior games, but if you're more into mythical RPGs, then you won't find a better one than this. As both Simon and Paul state in their letters, it's the graphics and gameplay that make *Vampire* so entertaining. But it could have been even better if it hadn't followed such a rigid structure.


Gargoyles and gothic spreads, how much more atmospheric can you get?

GP3

REVIEWED: Issue 94, *PCZ* October
SCORE: 80%

What we thought

PC ZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

"The series has become too familiar. And although it's well worth buying this third instalment, it's hard to call it an essential purchase."

What you said

I think you've completely missed the mark with your review of *GP3*. You said it's too clinical for non-hardcore enthusiasts, but that's just rubbish. Yes, you can mess around with gear ratios and stuff, but even the worst player will be able to finish in the top six on Rookie mode after just a few races.

Granted, the crowds look poor, the tyre walls adequate and the pit crew shoddy, but does that matter? The sound is as good as in any other F1 game and commentary would've just been off-putting – although pit crew communication would've been nice.

However, the quality of the AI, little touches such as dry lines on the track and mistakes from other cars, coupled with the fact that it's easy for newcomers while still catering for hardcore F1 fans, make *GP3* an essential purchase.

The Butler

GP3 is basically *GP2*, with graphics that look about two years old. *GP3* lets us down with blocky close ups, pop-up scenery, and cut-out crowds that sparkle. Force feedback is a disappointment, simply throwing you from side to side, with the odd kerb rumble thrown in for good measure. The awkward wheel display means that if you glance down at it, you almost always crash. A television style race banner, which works so well in other F1 sims, is needed. Pit lane renderings are laughable, with cars floating in mid air, while driving 50+ laps makes you realise just how lacking in atmosphere the game is. *GP3* desperately needs pit lane communication, which gives race information, team orders and a Walker-Brundle type commentary option. The sound is basic and tinny – where are the 600 BHP throaty engine sounds? And there's still no parade lap, safety car or team tactics. I'm so critical because it's not the great leap forward we were promised. If it had come out two years ago, it would have scored 96 per cent, but today, all things considered, 80 per cent is just about right.

Paul Cornock

Thank God, at least someone can still give accurate and unbiased reviews we can rely on. How certain other gaming magazines could rate *GP3* so highly is beyond belief, as it's a game with dated graphics and numerous flaws. Basically, it's exactly the same as its four-year-old predecessor.

I think you got the review pretty much spot on with 80 per cent. Although you could have mentioned that the game runs poorly with a Voodoo 2. Don't get me wrong, I love playing *GP3*, but 80 per cent is the maximum you can give a game when there is no split-axis peddle option (pretty much a necessity for a driving game!), replays are only ten seconds long, the graphics and sound are dated and there are loads of annoying bugs.

I'm going to go back to *Grand Prix Legends*, which is still the most entertaining racing game, even though it's two years old.

Some Call Me Tim

I think *GP3* is dreadful. I've been waiting for it for a long time, and I'm afraid to say that I'm hugely disappointed with one major part of it. It's too damn hard. So hard in fact that it's almost unplayable. I've completed both *GP1* and *GP2* on the medium difficulty settings, but even the Rookie level on *GP3* is proving too hard. I qualify about 10th, but in the few minutes between my qualifying lap and the end of the session, I somehow always end up at the back of the grid. I feel like I shouldn't even bother with the qualification session, and should just go straight into the race. After all, I'll still be starting from the same place.

In the race, as soon as I hit the throttle, my car wants to spin, even with the acceleration aid on. As for the car set up, what am I supposed to know about the intricacies of down force and brake balances? Surely these factors shouldn't affect your car as much as they do on Rookie level.

I've been an avid gamer for years and, while I don't consider myself to be the best game player

in the world, I'm certainly not the worst, particularly since I've completed loads of driving games in my time. I understand that this is a simulation, and in this respect the game is superb. My point is that playing a game if you can't enjoy it is pointless. Surely it should have been simpler on the easier difficulty settings, so as not to put off too many people early on. Personally, I doubt I'll ever play it again.

GP3 could have been the best racing game ever, for both rookies and pros. As it is, only people who are prepared to invest all of their spare time into it will ever truly master it. I'm sure not that many people will be prepared to do this.

I've spent £30 that I couldn't really afford on a game that I thought was going to last me a very long time. And after a mere two days, I'm pulling my hair out and screaming because it's not up to scratch. This isn't just my opinion, as many of my friends feel the same way. We're all avid gamers and we all agree that *GP3* is a huge disappointment.

O Cook

COMMENT

Oh dear, it seems the barrage of criticism for *GP3* continues, with letters that defend the game like The Butler's, being somewhat of a rarity. Most of you are disappointed that after years of waiting patiently, it failed to show the advances we'd been expecting. In truth, *GP3* is still a fantastic game, but it's infuriating when you think how good it could have been. Its general lack of atmosphere and often under par graphics let it down considerably, while the omission of pit communications and team work are baffling, especially when you think that it was heralded as the definitive F1 sim. However, to concentrate on the negatives would do the game an injustice, because even though it has its flaws, it's still one of the best driving games available on the PC.

DEUS EX

REVIEWED: Issue 93, *PCZ* September
SCORE: 94%

What we thought

PC ZONE CLASSIC

"It is a giant of a game and another step forward for the role-playing genre. Don't hesitate to buy it when you see the box in your local computer shop – you will not be disappointed."

What you said

After reading your benchmark review of *Deus Ex*, I raced to the shops and bought a copy. Now don't get me wrong, it is a good game but 94 per cent is a bit steep. I have never had the pleasure of playing *System Shock 2*, but judging by your review I guess it's great. So since *Deus Ex* is apparently better, I grabbed a copy. Firstly, the bodies of the NSF terrorists have almost no hit areas like in *Soldier Of Fortune*, and some head shots don't always kill. The character you control loses his limbs, but the NSF keep going until they die. The close-up graphics are poor, your partner Anna is so instantly dislikeable that you just want to kill her. Trust me, *Vampire: The Masquerade – Redemption* is by far the better game. I think 80 per cent would have been a more realistic score.

RPG Fan – 1983

Your review was spot on. After playing your demo, I went down to HMV to buy *Deus Ex*. This is surely one of the most involving and realistic games I've ever played, and I think it's even better than *Half-Life*. The way the guards stop what they're doing if they hear you is amazing. For once we have a game that is not strictly linear, and the character interaction is first class. It's surely going to be the game of the year.

Sam Wilson

After reading your review of *Deus Ex*, I went out and bought it. But, unfortunately, I was really disappointed with it. After playing for about ten hours, I didn't have a clue what was going on and became really bored. I was expecting action and fun, but instead I spent my time just sneaking up behind enemies and attempting to knife them or take them down with the baton. Although the idea of the game is excellent, far too much thinking is involved. By comparing it to *GoldenEye* and *Half-Life*, you've insulted not only gamers worldwide, but also the creators of these games. I also think that 94 per cent was far too generous a score. I was not overly surprised that I didn't like this game, as it requires a great deal of thought, planning and patience, but it was these factors which ruined my experience of it. My advice to anyone considering buying *Deus Ex* is to think again.

Guy McGechan

After playing the demo and reading your excellent review of *Deus Ex*, I went out and bought a copy. I wasn't disappointed. The atmosphere is amazing and the depth of the plot is really something. I think the graphics are excellent, too. However, I thought the AI was one problem with this otherwise excellent game. I found the enemies to be incredibly moronic at certain stages, for example, if the enemy became aware of my presence I could just wait for them to calm down by hiding for a minute, and they'd just forget I ever existed. This is a bit poor when you consider how excellent the rest of the game is, and I think *Ion Storm* could have worked a bit harder on that aspect. Aside from the AI though, it's still exciting – the atmosphere is tense and the missions are always rewarding.

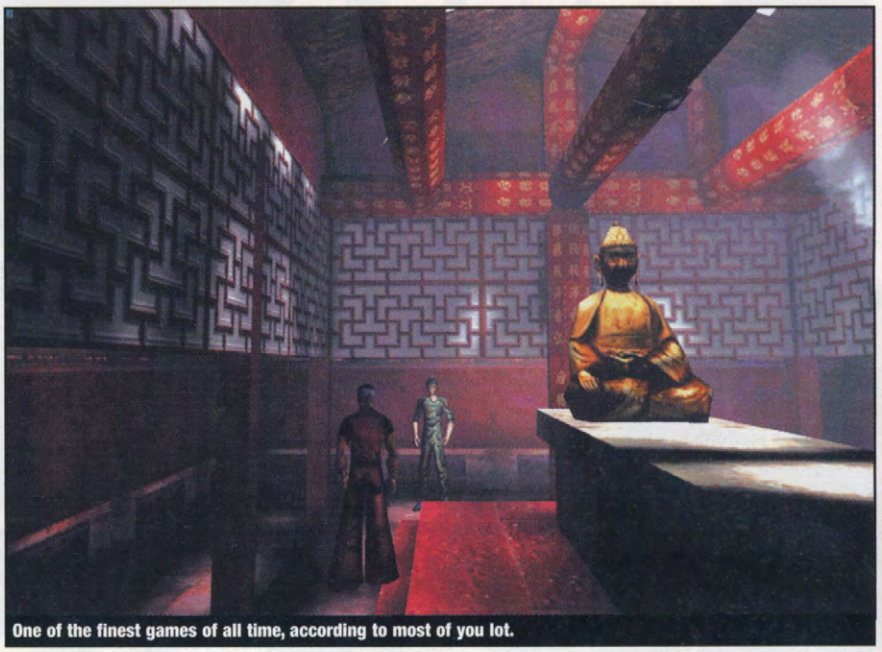
Paul Greveson

As a games player with ever decreasing leisure time, I use *PC ZONE* to find games that interest me. Generally, I find your reviews to be accurate and your new scoring system is perfectly balanced. Some of your best reviews have included *System Shock 2*, *X – Beyond The Frontier*, *StarLancer*, *Battlezone 2* and most recently *Deus Ex*. It's by far the best game I have ever played and your opinions were spot on. It's a masterpiece and will be hard to beat. I suggest that *Ion Storm* are institutionalised and kept locked up on drip feeds, until they produce a sequel.

Jason Back

COMMENT

We've been completely swamped by your comments on *Deus Ex* this month. And apart from a few disconcerted gripes, your opinions have generally been pretty positive. Guy, you seem to have missed the point of the game entirely. *Deus Ex* was never supposed to be just a FPS, and the action is based more around realism than frantic fragging. That's why so much thought is involved, so that you can't always just wade straight in and start shooting all over the place. *Deus Ex* is a deep and engrossing game that can be played in many different ways. When we made comparisons to *GoldenEye* and *Half-Life*, we meant it bares similarities to these games, not that it's just like them. You may recall we also said that *Deus Ex* has similarities to *System Shock 2* and *Thief*, games that are very different to the two titles you mentioned. PCZ



One of the finest games of all time, according to most of you lot.

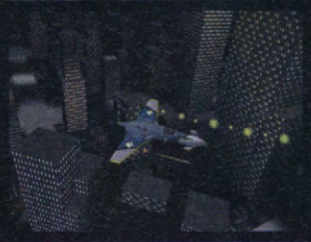


Although *GP3* suffers from shoddy graphics and lack of atmosphere, it's still one of the best racing games around.

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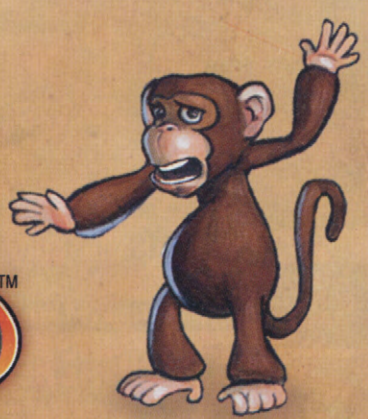
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PCZONLINE

LOOKING AHEAD

ONLINE EDITOR Richie Shoemaker



Ask anyone who was at ECTS this year what they thought of Europe's premier games show and the response would be the same – it was crap. This year was my fourth ECTS and the worst so far. The silver lining for me was that for Online games it was actually very promising. The *EverQuest* add-on aside, all the online-only games on display showed imagination. *Anarchy Online* was perhaps the best on offer, along with the ambitious *WWII Online* but, behind closed doors, I was rather taken with Gameplay.com's *Pirates Online,* which we shall be having a look at over the next few months, along with *Starpeace, Jumpgate* and a good few others.

What is quite exciting at the moment is that online games are opening up to new genres. At the moment, RPGs and mods are the most popular games online, but soon we shall see real-time strategy, football management and driving games hit the Net. It is only a matter of time before everybody will be catered for and it's already obvious that more new space combat games are being announced as online rather than single-player. It's almost as if we are working on a whole new platform, and for those worrying that the days of the PC game are numbered, you only have to look to Internet games to see that that's not case.

PCZONLINE REVIEWS

112 AOE II: THE CONQUERORS

113 STAR TREK VOYAGER: ELITE FORCE

114 UNREAL4EVER TOURNAMENT V6.0

114 QIII CATCH THE CHICKEN V1.1

117 NOX QUEST

118 STRIKE FORCE BETA V1.40

118 DIASPORA

120 SOFTWARE ROUND-UP

ONLINE REVIEWS POLICY

When it comes to mods and total conversions (TCs) for games such as *Half-Life*, they are often released in beta form (ie unfinished) and are generally being updated constantly. When we review them we will always try to take into consideration that they are often worked on by teams working just for the love of it and released free for our enjoyment. Even so, there is a lot of pap out there and downloading such things can often be a waste of good surfing time.

Similarly with retail online games, such as *EverQuest*, code is always being updated and, although we can't provide regular updates, we will try to review major ones as and when they occur.

NEWS



Full-on and realistic damage is assured in *E-Racer*.

ONLINE ROAD RAGE

E-Racer joins the online racing revolution

Joining the line-up of online racers is *E-Racer* from UK team Rage. *E-Racer*, like Codemasters' *Insane* and Take 2's *4X4 Evolution*, will allow players to log on and play through single or team-based multiplayer championships. Special events will be set up from time to time, with hints that special prizes will be on offer.

For single-players, the game will also include off-line tracks, time trial modes and the like, with new courses and cars being unlocked the further you progress through the game – nothing special there then.

Realistic weather effects, damage modelling and in-car views will be available and for owners of WAP phones, championship standings and race results can be checked while you're away from the PC. *E-Racer* is currently scheduled to hit store shelves next February, and before you ask, it will be free to play online. More details can be found at **www.rage.co.uk**



You can download new tracks and cars from the Rage website.

COUNTER-STRIKE CHECKS OUT

Coming to a store near you

Many of you in the know will have already heard that *Counter-Strike*, the obscenely popular team-based multiplayer mod for *Half-Life* is due for a retail release this winter. Beta 7.1 was released recently, featuring a drivable APC and this feature will be extended within Beta 8.0 – the version of the game that will finally be released into stores when it is ready.

The retail release of *Counter-Strike* will be a complete stand-alone game that won't require the full version of *Half-Life* to play. Moreover, included in the cut-price package will be regular *Half-Life* and *Opposing Force* multiplayer, *Team Fortress Classic* and three other new third-party mods. Those of you worried about having to shell out to continue playing can rest easy; Beta 8 of *Counter-Strike* will also be released on the Net free of charge, and we can expect regular updates until Valve's T*eam Fortress 2* arrives, after which, development on *Counter-Strike 2* will commence. The most important website in the entire world is **www.counter-strike.net**



Even as it is, *Counter-Strike* is worth £30 of anyone's money.



THE SCARS OF VELIOUS

The runaway train that is *EverQuest* steams on with another add-on, but is it in danger of going off the rails?

The Scars Of Velious is the upcoming expansion to the hugely popular *EverQuest* online RPG. Unlike its predecessor, *Ruins Of Kunark*, *Velious* does not add to the players level capabilities, but instead concentrates on story, interface and items.

Velious will essentially comprise 16 linked zones, through which the tireless adventurer has to progress in a linear mode. Since it's been designed specifically for 30-60 level characters, it won't be a pushover and some sections are intended to be all but impossible for many players. There are also two new 'Planes' for the highest and toughest parties. There is an overall storyline tied to the history of Norrath (you can read all about it at **www.station.sony.com/everquest**), one which will be revealed as you progress through the lands of the expansion.



Bit too much hair gel, luv?

Graphically, *Velious* uses enhanced-polygon items similar to the Kunark engine and is predominately set across icy wastelands – potentially monotonous surroundings, which developer Verant is attempting to counteract with lots of monsters and buildings. Compared to other online RPGs that are poised to join in the fray, *EverQuest* seems to be losing ground in the graphics department, but the fresh content and change of direction in terms of gameplay should see it through.

Curiously, *Scars Of Velious* seems like it is aiming at a *Diablo*-style of online play. Up until now *EverQuest* has been pretty much a case of do what you like where you like, but with the new add-on, the emphasis has shifted towards tight storylines from which diversions are few and far between. For those seriously thinking of joining *EverQuest* for the first time, this aspect may be alluring, and for *EverQuest* veterans the promise of new weapons should be enough to keep the saliva flowing. Despite the constant stream of criticism from disenfranchised gamers, *EverQuest* seems to go from strength to strength,and it looks as though there is no stopping this train with its 200,000 passengers still happily on board.

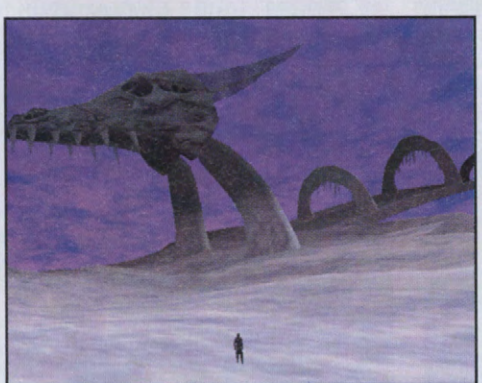
EverQuest: The Scars Of Velious is due for a US release on December 5. Ubi Soft will be unleashing a UK package soon after.



Compared to most monsters, this is a pussycat.



The graphics are more than a little primitive, they are positively prehistoric.



Oh my, that's a big one!



Killer Penguin or Death Lemming?



The scale of the buildings is in stark contrast to the bleak landscapes.

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The future's so bright, you gotta wear shades.



Another online version of *Elite*, but this one sounds good.

EVE: SECOND GENESIS

Let there be light

EVE: Second Genesis is the creation of Icelandic games Company CCP – and is an attempt to bring the smash-hit *Elite* game up to date. Appropriately scheduled for release at the end of 2001 it features some of the most stunning graphics we've seen, as well as more than 5,000 solar systems, all tied together in a persistent environment.

The concept of the game is almost pure *Elite*, players can trade and fight their way to glory in a similar fashion to the good-old days on the BBC Micro. What's new is the ability for the player to have a character, not just for cosmetic purposes but to affect how you perform actions from controlling different types of ships to creating legally-binding contracts (in game, of course).

Boasting more than 100 ship types, all of which are fully customisable down to the paint colours, thousands of weapon and equipment types and even the ability to research and manufacture your own variants, *EVE* is extending the original concept quite a lot.



The wealth of customisable options are amazing.

EVE is online only and CCP aims to produce a single game environment rather than multiple isolated 'worlds'. A core aspect of the game will be the ability of a gamer to become, as the producers put it "truly legendary". A player can rise to such fame and power that their actions affect the overall storyline and impact on thousands of others – a megalomaniacs dream in fact.

While doing all this you will be treated to a visual feast – this is a real contender for the 'lush-graphics award' and CCP is up front about saying it wants to blow *Freelancer* out of the water. The 'cost' to the gamer is a minimum spec of around a PIII400 with 64Mb, at least a GeForce 256 videocard and a 56K modem.

Beta testing is planned for early next year. CCP has been keeping quite about this game, but now the cat is out the bag expect to see a lot more about this title. You can start by visiting **www.eve-online.com**

RAGE JOINS THE CLUB

Fantasy football manager on the way

Known for its eye-splitting visuals, Rage Software is poised to make its mark on new genres with its totally free browser-based football management *game Internet Football Club.*

Unlike Anco's online offering, *Play As Manager* (AKA *Player Manager Online*), *IFC* will feature fictional teams and players, with managers starting off each season on equal footing. Rather than stats, each player is rated under a five-point star system and managers can set training sessions, tactics, transfers and also email other managers in the game. Before each match managers must submit their 11-man squad and five reserves, with pre-set team orders that allow teams to switch tactics and players at certain points in the game. For example, replacing strikers with defensive players if you happen to be two goals up.

As it will be played through your browser, there will be no hefty downloads to worry about, nor can we expect luscious visuals. The made-up names and lack of depth may put a few diehard *Champ Man* fans off, but at least it's free. You can sign up to join the *IFC* now by shooting off to **www.internetfootballclub.com**



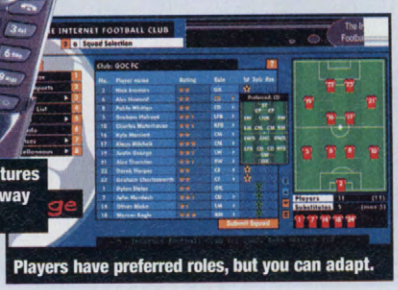
You can set up a division with your friends.



Design your own club strip.



Check your fixtures while you're away from the PC.



Players have preferred roles, but you can adapt.

SHORTS

AOL 24-7

With BT's SurfTime package proving popular at £9.99 a month, with free off-peak Internet access, AOL has decided to muscle in by offering its users free access all day, every day for just £14.99 a month. The service will be made available to existing AOL users first, with new users able to sign up later on. AOL also says it's testing its ADSL service currently and hopes to make the high-speed service available early next year. **www.aol.co.uk** has all the details.

NEXT STEP BEYOND

Egosoft, the German developer of *X-Beyond The Frontier* and *X-Tension* is looking to x-tend its x-cellent space trading sim by creating an online version. No details have been announced as yet, but we can expect a similar look and feel to the original game. X-pect more details soon.

ATTIC ATTACK

Just launched is GameLoft (**www.gameloft.co.uk**), a UK-localised portal of an international web of games' sites, aiming to take on the big boys, namely Microsoft's Gaming Zone, Gameplay and Barrysworld. There is the usual spread of news, browser-based games and the like and for music fans there is also Beatz4Geekz, a music label offering game-related MP3s, such as the *EverQuest* inspired *Has Anyone Seen My Corpse?*

CHANGING NAMES

Anco's *Player Manager Online* has been given a name change and will henceforth be known as *Play As Manager*. We had a quick dabble with the latest version of the game at the latest ECTS in London, and while we wait for news of its release, you can find out more by visiting **www.playasmanager.co.uk**

UNITY

Paying US$10 a month to play online RPGs such as *Asheron's Call* may not sound like much but the money soon adds up. Unity, a sci-fi online RPG from Purplexed Designs, is planned as a totally free RPG, with much of the cost covered by sponsorship. Release won't be for at least another year, so we won't go into too much detail, but if you are aching for information, **www.purplexed.net** is a good place to start.



ANARCHY ONLINE



***Anarchy Online* attempts to take the persistent world genre beyond the gnomes and into the future. But is it just *EverQuest* with lasers or something more? *Jed Norton* investigates**

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Funcom
PUBLISHER Funcom
WEBSITE www.anarchy-online.com
OUT December

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Massive player worlds (up to 50,000 gamers)
- Huge skill range
- Two warring factions
- Four 'classes' to play
- Dynamic quests

Aliens... AD 29,475. Omni-Tek, a 282 billion employee hyper-corp, is facing a problem. Its hold on the rights to both nano-tech and bio-tech are due to expire. Mankind, whose galactic empire is founded on these technologies, holds its breath. In a distant part of the galaxy lies Rubi-Ka, lease-hold planet of Omni-Tek, source of wealthy minerals, burning under twin suns, partially terra-formed, partially tamed and the epitome of the conflict that is brewing.

Anarchy Online allows the gamer to enter the above setting at the start of a four-year story-arc. You choose your side – Omni-Tek or Rebels – and after that you're pretty much on your own. Well perhaps not. Unlike most other virtual environments, *AO* intends to keep the gamer within the storyline and it does this via its clever mission generator – but more on that later.

BLADE RUNNER...

As with other games in the genre, you can choose not just the side you're on but a type of character – wave goodbye to dwarves and elves, thank God, and say hello to such 'Breeds' as: Homo Solitus, Homo Atrox, Homo Opifex and Homo Nano. All of these are genetically engineered humans that are specialised in different aspects of build, mind and so on. What is particularly good about AO is the actual character creation system. After choosing your breed and other details, you actually get to design your own character. We aren't just talking about what colour your pants are either – body build, height, head, hair – it's all customisable and to a very large degree. The morphing range given to the player is quite extensive and, at long last, is not confined to just creation – get yourself enough money and you can have a nip 'n' tuck anytime you like.

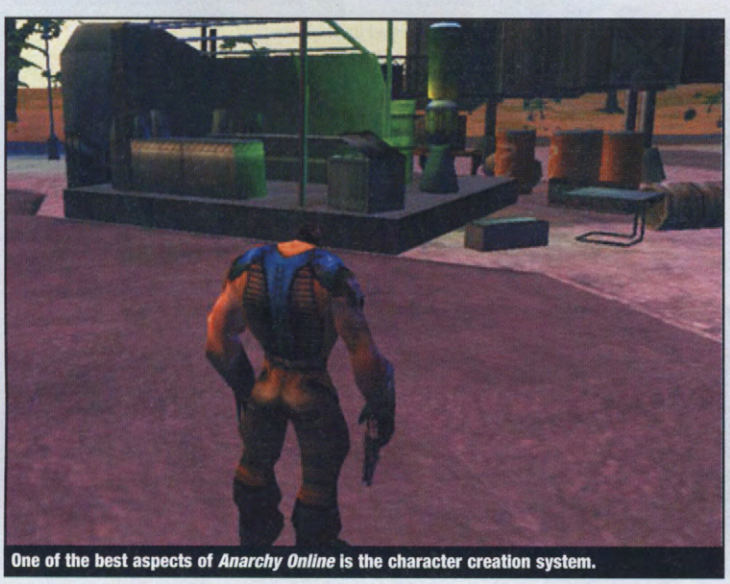
Outside of character creation, you discover that your choice of sides has more than just a superficial effect. Omni-Tek characters inhabit a world of high-tech goodies, cheap weapons, good armour and a large amount of bio-enhanced drugs. The Rebels have to make do with a decidedly lower-tech area and must scavenge what they can – a bit of a *Mad Max* scenario, in fact – but at least the rebels are free. Ah, good old freedom, it's so underrated.

Combat in *AO* is the primary source of interest – whether it's against the indigenous wildlife or other gamers or NPCs, but combat generation is not driven purely by chance encounters. *AO* has a unique system for generating quests for its characters, plus you can generate quests for others.

...MEETS MISSION IMPOSSIBLE...

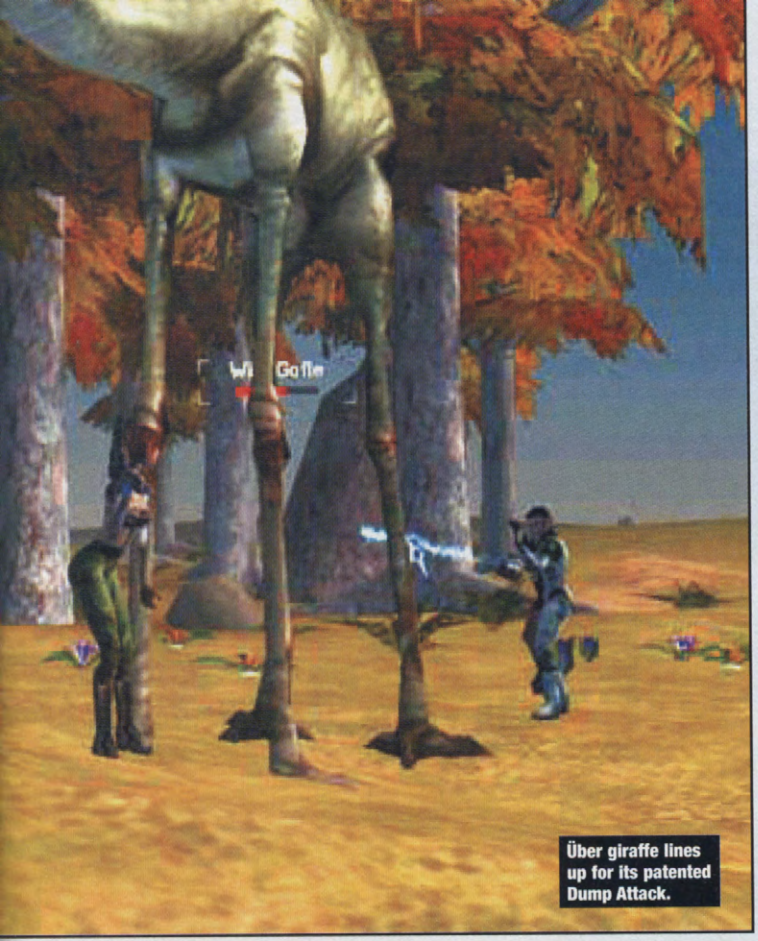
The system generated quests are unique to the individual gamer: this means that you can get a quest, log off for however long and then come back to find that you can still complete it. They can also be tied in expressly to the overall storyline giving a deeper sense of immersion. This aspect alone makes *AO* attractive for those who can't spend 10 hours a day playing, but for those who require a more intense experience you can get a player-driven quest.

You can generate a quest or mission for a wide variety of tasks – the simplest example is an assassination. You set the target, the prize in terms of money, items and experience points,


One of the best aspects of *Anarchy Online* is the character creation system.



I'm sure that's some scary goth club in Brighton.


Über giraffe lines up for its patented Dump Attack.


Social Interaction via emotes.


Gothic splendour in a forest at moonlight.


You'll have some strange encounters.

and then add a time limit, if any, and who can take on the mission (eg "Hey everyone – I'll give you my new mobile if you kill the editor before Monday!"). Of course, with so many people rushing to be first to get the task done you aren't going to want to log off or you'll miss the prize – and the sheer fun of it.

...MEETS DUNE...

Combat itself is a mix of 'magic' via nano-technology, melee and ranged weapons. You won't see single-shot kills in *AO* as it would be unbalancing, nor will you actually be involved in combat at the most minute levels.

vs players in *Asheron's Call* – it just looks a lot sexier.

The combat is also restricted in where and upon whom you can inflict it. Cities and the like are controlled with suppression gas that prevents combat, other areas allow you to hunt wildlife and others are entirely open for wanton slaughter. In the context of the overall theme, this makes sense – 'civilised' areas are just that, albeit under the control of various mind-control gasses. While you can consent to a duel in specified areas, you aren't going to have to constantly worry about being taken out while

"Unlike most other virtual environments, *Anarchy Online* intends to keep the gamer within the storyline and does this via its clever mission generator"

AO combat is controlled by the server – so gamer tactics revolve around the appropriate usage of when to run, when to shoot and what to use.

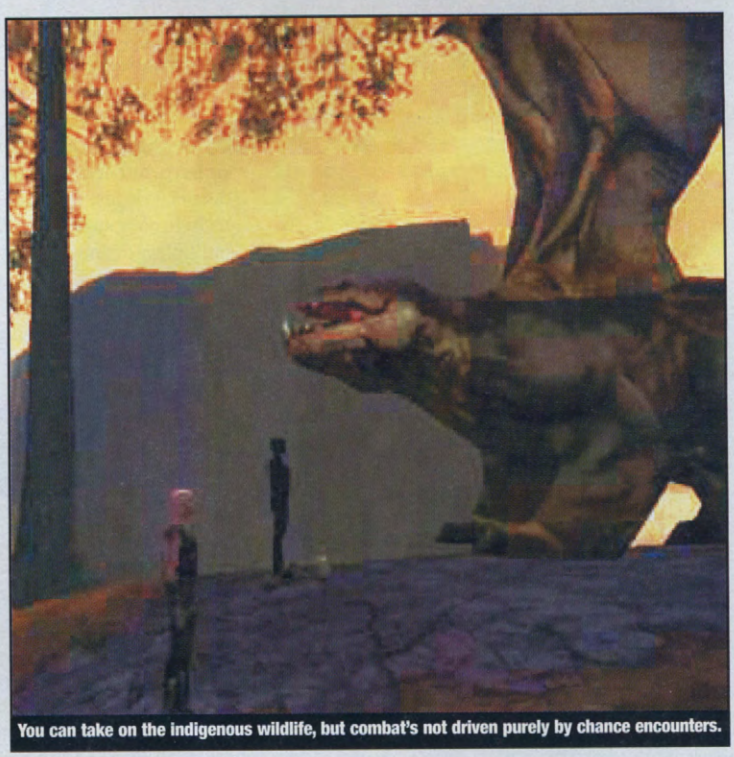
I have to say that one-on-one fights can look a little silly – two guys run up toe-to-toe and start blasting away with laser guns – somehow it doesn't seem right. Take this up a level to group combat and it suddenly looks and is a lot different: Get a bruiser up close in armour with a bloody great axe, meanwhile your other chaps are blazing away long range with rifles. The enemy is doing the same – and it looks just great.

At this point in time, the ranges of weapons are relatively short – it's a balancing issue, but don't ever expect a *Counter-Strike*-style sniper guy – you aren't likely to see one. If you need an analogy, it's very similar to players you're down the local pub.

...Meets 1984...

Skills are extensive, there are, erm... lots of them. *AO* uses a points/level distribution system – you choose what you spend them on after you have earned them by levelling (up to 200 levels). Caps exist depending on your breed and profession, but you won't be able to know exactly what others' abilities are simply by their level. You can also take a less combat-orientated role and develop trading skills – and given enough notoriety and money you can even get yourself a bigger pad to live in.

Every player will have their own room when they start – used as both a mini-storage area and a safe house. Your room is safe from all others. unless you give them your 'key'. Unlike


You can take on the indigenous wildlife, but combat's not driven purely by chance encounters.

a real key, this is your genetically-coded identity, which you can revoke at will. This makes your room a safe point for socialising and guild or clan activities. Of course, if you end up with a huge penthouse it's also got pulling-power – though unfortunately not in the real world.

SUMMARY

AO is damn good looking both in its scenery, attention to detail and its character movements. There are some superb motion-captured 'emotes' that enable you to get across how your character feels, our favourites being *Pulp Fiction* and 'Moon' – even better you can script these and really have some fun with them.

With a cross between *Dune* and *Star Wars* as your backdrop and a single world that takes hours to cross, inhabited by up to 50,000 other gamers and the flexibility to allow for both casual and hardcore gamers, *Anarchy Online* looks like a sure bet.

Work continues apace on all aspects of the game and an open beta stage is almost within sight. Within the next few months, we'll all be seeing a lot more of *AO* and that is definitely a good thing.

THE MOD SQUAD

THE BATTLEGROUNDS FOR HALF-LIFE



"Nice hat by the way."

Online, Americans and us Brits have been at war ever since the early days of Doom, *but never have we fought under our national flags.* The Battle Grounds, *a teamplay mod for* Half-Life *based on the American War of Independence aims to change all that. We spoke with Jamie Hutchings, project leader of* The Battle Grounds, *to find out what we might expect.*

PCZ *The Battle Grounds* seems like an 18th-century take on *Team Fortress*. Is this a fair approximation?

JH Yes, that's fairly accurate. *The Battle Grounds* is a team-focused *Half-Life* mod that stresses people should work together with their team members. Both the British and American teams have a set of classes, much like *Team Fortress*, that have their own special weapons and abilities.

PCZ Why did you choose to base your mod on the American War of Independence?

JH Well, I'm very interested in history. I live in the United States and have been interested in my nation's history for quite some time. I'd started to realise that a lot of the mods out there were following the same path as *Counter-Strike* and thought it would be interesting to have something new and original for a change. I also wanted to make people a bit more interested in history.

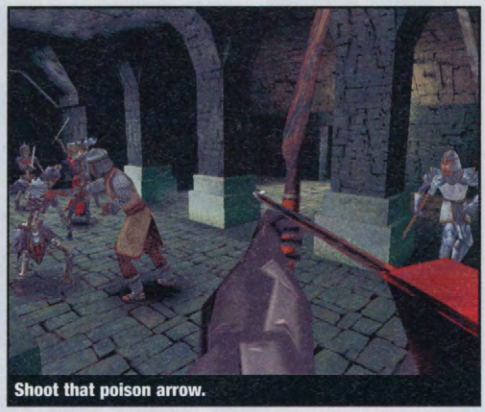
PCZ With Britons fighting Americans, do you envisage some people might take *The Battle Grounds* a little too seriously? Does your development team include people from both sides of the pond, and is their any rivalry between them?

JH Well, I see people having a little healthy competition, but nothing that is going to start outrage. Currently on our team we have people from all around the world. From the US, Canada, Australia and Norway. We don't have anyone from Britain specifically working on the game itself, but we've been consulting with many British people to get their opinions on certain aspects of the game.

PCZ Are you aiming for historical accuracy with the mod, or a balance of fun?

JH We're aiming for both, but leaning a little closer to the balance of fun side. We're trying our hardest to make all the player model's uniforms historically accurate. We're also trying to get the environments the game will be played in as accurate as we possibly can to historical times. The weapons will be spot on as far as looks go, but the reload time of the weapons is going to be sped up in order to keep the action of the game flowing.

The team is hoping to release the first version of The Battle Grounds *at the end of October. Check out* **www.halflife.net/bg** *for more information.*


Shoot that poison arrow.


Now that's what I call skeletal animation.

LEGENDS OF MIGHT & MAGIC

Might & Magic gets set to make its FPS debut

Although we prefer the sugar-coated peanut variety, the *M&M* series has done rather well on PC, with eight RPGs, three strategy games and a lame action adventure all appearing in recent years. *Legends Of Might & Magic* is the latest in the unending series, this time using the LithTech engine (last seen in *Kiss Psycho Circus*) and marking the series' debut in the first-person shooter category.

In a nutshell, *Legends* is *Unreal Tournament* with a fantasy centre and nuggets of role-playing. There will be six different character classes to choose from – crusader, druid and sorceress on the good side and warrior, cleric and archer on the bad – which together should offer a balance of offensive and defensive skills. For offline play, *Legends Of Might & Magic* will include computer-controlled players, but it is as a team-based multiplayer game that *Legends* will come into its own, with new twists on the usual range of Deathmatch and Capture The Flag type games. 3DO (**www.3do.com**) is aiming to release *Legends Of Might & Magic* next February – and, although it's not saying much, it's sure to be the best *M&M* game to date.


Because LOM&M uses the LithTech 2.0 engine, it looks as good in outdoor areas as it does in.

NO ESCAPE

Quake meets *Bomberman* online for an epic battle

With *Anarchy Online* getting all of the attention, most people forget that Funcom has another online game in the works, one that may lack depth, but at least offers fast-paced cartoon action. *No Escape* is of course the game, named we imagine because of the nature of the 3D levels across which players must hunt and eliminate their opponents. Rather than create flat levels, each is set on a small planet where, if you keep running in the same direction, you'll end up exactly where you began.

Utilising a third-person perspective, *No Escape* scores players who collect points markers that are placed across each level. Killing a rival will also help increase your tally. Eight weapons, from rocket launchers to atom bombs, will be featured, with eight different characters to choose from. The release is set for the end of the year. Check out **www.noesc.com** for all the details.


As well as Deathmatch, you can expect a few team games.


No Escape will be free to play when it's released.

You don't train our creatures . . .
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***WWII Online* will be set in the early years of WWII.**



If you're a pacifist, you can ferry around soldiers or supplies. Just hope you're not shot down.

WWII ONLINE

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Cornered Rat Software
PUBLISHER Playnet
WEBSITE www.wwiionline.net
OUT Early 2001

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- You can choose to drive, fly, sail or fight for every major armed force that fought during WWII
- Unlimited possibilities for missions
- Rise through the ranks until you command entire armies, or stay as a private

Could this be the first ever game to see FPS fans, sim heads and armchair generals, all fighting together online? *Jed Norton* tries to find the answers

Waaaaaay back in our July issue, on page 56 if you're interested, we revealed *WWII Online*, a simulation of the war that changed the history of Europe forever and a game that would combine tank, ship and aircraft simulation, first-person combat, role-playing and resource management. Fans of *Hidden & Dangerous* could run around in their dozens, killing soldiers on the other side, flight-sim nutters would be free to strafe them and in support would rumble the tank commanders as rearguard land and sea-based artillery pounded the enemy positions. Even those who might object to this virtual online total war could partake in the action; ferrying supplies and soldiers around in trucks, jeeps, troop planes and staff cars. And somewhere a general would be directing equipment, men and supplies as the lines on the map of war snaked around hour by hour. Even more remarkable was the fact that the whole shebang would be squeezed from computer to computer via a screeching analogue modem. In its grand ambition, *WWII Online* not only crosses the boundaries of every genre imaginable, it meshes them together. That, at least, is the plan.

Simply put, *WWII Online* is a simulation of the theatres of conflict during World War II. Each theatre can host between 1,000-1,500 players simultaneously across a map that is 1,400 x 1,200 kilometres in size and is controlled by a strategic layer of players who have earned suitable rank.

Upon embarkation you read the WWII newspaper that details all the hot spots and recent victories or losses and choosing a hot spot drops you into that area of the theatre, whereupon you can see all the local bases and what missions are available.



"Of course it looks silly. It's French."

UPDATE

"There are a number of mission types," says Chris 'MO' Sherland, the game's producer. "For example, the games will automatically post up defence missions if that base is under attack. On the other hand, the player can post missions via the command structure itself. Alternatively, you can simply get together with a group of friends and organise your own mission.

"If you were a fighter pilot and you'd earned two kills, but then got shot down over the Channel, you have a choice: you can either lose some of that earned experience and warp back to your base; or you can choose to ditch. If you ditch you can tough it out, organise a rescue from an MT Boat and say steal a truck and get back home without losing any experience."

ECO WARRIORS

WWII Online isn't just a straightforward sim/action hybrid, it also has RPG and economic aspects to it. Each side has vital supply lines and production facilities that they'll have to protect from the enemy forces during the war. Wasting an enemy factory will drain your opponent's resources; factories and supply lines can also be captured and redirected to your own guys.

Supply and transportation will rely on good commanders and poor performances will lose you both rank and willing players to fight for you.

Entire groups from other games such as *Warbirds*, which a lot of the current team had experience with, are already planning to move wholesale into *WW2O* when it opens. But *WW2O* isn't just a flight sim. You can crew up an entire tank, controlling all aspects of it rather than relying on the AI to handle them. This has the potential to be the best simulation of a tank to date – especially since switching between multiple viewpoints and screens is no longer a necessity. Now you can simply order your driver and gunner to do what is needed and the commander can concentrate on spotting enemies.

All of the co-operative vehicles and ships require a great communications system and *WWII Online* offers a multi-layered approach to reflect this. You can switch radio channels to speak to different levels of the battlefield, from your own crew to the entire theatre – well, your own side anyway. Additionally, there is the ability to use third-party voice communications software – we wait to see if Cornered Rat actually tie one such service into the game itself.

THE LANDSCAPE AIN'T CHANGING

Graphically, *WWII Online* looks good, it is not the best, but it's pretty damn close. The models of armour and planes that have been shown to date look excellent, both exteriors and interiors, and the landscape is more than adequate. Sensibly, *WWII Online* does not have fully dynamic landscape, otherwise within a few days everywhere would resemble the Somme, circa 1916. Purists may want

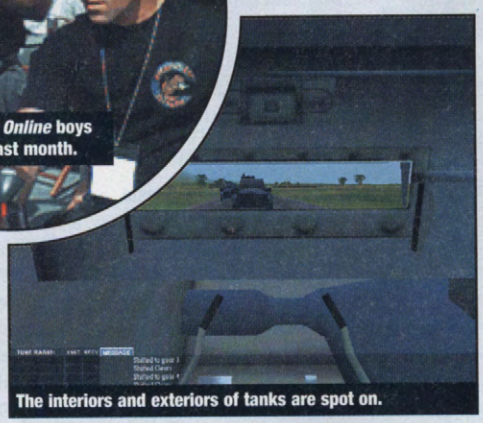

If you're having a bad day, you always have the option of going on a massive killing spree.


All co-operative vehicles have a great communications system.


Take cover behind gutted-out buildings.


The *WWII Online* boys at ECTS last month.


"Ginger? Is it hot in here...?"


The interiors and exteriors of tanks are spot on.

to be able to destroy everything, but the designers have realised the need for preserving features for infantry and vehicles to hide behind.

Another good decision is that only infantry can control and occupy a set position. If a factory, building or emplacement needs capturing then

"In its grand ambition, *WWII Online* not only crosses the boundaries of every game genre imaginable, it meshes them together smoothly"

it requires an infantryman to enter it and seize it. EIBUA (if you don't know, get an army dictionary) is therefore a distinct possibility and tanks won't have it all their own way.

As well as the theatres, there will be a number of arenas to simply go head to head in and even in the full theatre there is little restriction to simply strapping yourself into a Spitfire and going out to seek glory.

Having said that, as the game develops over time and the war expands into new areas, new technologies become available. Eventually you will get to see the über-weapons of the time, such as King Tigers, although these will not only be rare but also only available depending on supply lines and rank. You aren't likely to be given a meaty tank unless you've already proved yourself elsewhere.

WWII Online is an ambitious project that is running now in closed beta. Its technical detail in the weaponry appeals to hardcore *WWII* fans, but the instant gratification levels will also be high for those less fascinated with tweaking propeller pitch (whatever that is) to get an extra 5mph out of a Spitfire.

We really need to see this one running with a few hundred players to get a good feel for it, but it has great potential and a dedicated and proven team working on it. Definitely one to keep an eye on. PZ

SEARCH ENGINE

WORLD WAR II

With Warlord and Victor comics, films such as *Force Ten From Navarone* and *Where Eagles Dare* and cool games like the recent PC gems *Commandos*, *Sudden Strike* and *Hidden & Dangerous*, World War II has always been a large part of youth culture and continues to be. Where better to read up on the history of said war and the games that are on the way than a visit to the Net. Here is where to start your quest.

WORLD WAR II ONLINE HQ

www.hq.wwiionline.com



Without a doubt, the finest website related to *WWII Online*, with more features news and services than you can shake a 'potato masher' at. From here, players who are interested can even set up their own clans for when the game is released.

DOGFIGHTER

www.dogfighter.com



Probably the best website for combat-ready armchair flyers. Well-designed and regularly updated, it covers everything in the flight sim world, even online games.

WORLD WAR II WEBSITE ASSOCIATION

www.ww2wa.com



Click on 'member services' and you'll be able to find absolutely anything on World War II, from photographs to detailed information on battles and even bullet penetration. Not much on computer games, though, but for reference a good place to start.

TACTICAL PLANET

www.tacticalplanet.com



Not strictly a WWII website as it covers all things military in gaming pertaining to strategy and first-person action, from the World War II up until the present day. Unfortunately, it only covers a few games indepth, which is a shame.

WWII TITANS

www.clanplaid.net/misc/titans



Remember *Myth II* – Bungie's fabulous orcs and goblins 3D RTS? Well, someone only went and done a WWII conversion that swaps wizards for GIs and tanks. *Titans* is the latest from the developer, you can find his previous WWII mod *Recon* at www.clanplaid.net/misc/recon.

REVIEWS





Your small community is started... but time is already ticking.



Some defences are probably a good idea at this stage.





The onslaught is expected at any moment... time to beef up that army.



Your small community is now a thriving town... but a vulnerable one.



So much for building land forces... the invasion comes by sea.

AGE OF EMPIRES II: THE CONQUERORS

£24.99 • Ensemble Studios/Microsoft • Out now • Full version of *Age Of Empires II: The Age Of Kings* required

Laurence Scotford prefers to do his sacking and pillaging on the Internet

Let's take stock, for the moment, of the current state of the world in online gaming. On the one hand, you have a lifetime's worth of first-person shooters. Led by the mighty *Half-Life/Team Fortress* (or a total conversion thereof) and the equally impressive *Quake III Arena*, these are ideal fodder for a weekday lunchtime. You can get into the action instantly, polish off a dozen lesser opponents and get out just as quickly. On the other hand, there's the ever-growing selection of on-line RPGs, offering the role-playing connoisseur many evenings of exploration and character development, punctuated by the occasional bout of combat.

Stuck somewhere in the middle of this is the poor RTS community. You know the score, we've all been there before. You start a game, spend three-quarters of an hour building forces and hardly seeing anything of the other players and then... wham, bam, thank you Mam... somebody triggers an apocalyptic battle and it's all over in seconds.

On paper, *Conquerors* offers the multiplayer aficionado a welcome departure from this sad state-of-affairs in the shape of its new game types: King Of The Hill, Defend The Wonder and Wonder Race. These do seem to have been designed with multiplayer games in mind. In fact, don't bother challenging the computer to a game of King Of The Hill unless you're looking for something to cure your insomnia.

Defend The Wonder is the perfect antidote to the lengthy pre-battle stages that curse most RTS games. Because everybody starts out in the most advanced age and with an obscene amount of resources, the only sensible course of action is to quickly cook yourself up an army to your taste and wade in there. Then there's King Of The Hill, which tends to be time limited because once somebody reaches the monument at the centre of the map, play becomes fast and frantic until the end.

Imagine my disappointment on discovering that among the now thriving *Conquerors* community on MSN Gaming Zone, there doesn't appear to be one person interested in any of the new game types. No, everybody is quite content with the boring old Random Map game, or at best a Deathmatch. Let's hope that the community on Wireplay is a bit more adventurous when it finally gets started.

INFAMY, INFAMY... THEY'VE ALL GOT IT INFAMY

Another new aspect that didn't seem to be getting any takers is the Last Man Standing victory condition. In this case you can enjoy team play, but once the winning team has finished off its enemies, the team is dissolved and former teammates get to turn on each other. I thoroughly recommend it – it adds frisson to the proceedings because, while working together with your teammates, you should also be thinking ahead and ensuring that you start the end-game with the strategically stronger position.

> **"Defend The Wonder is the perfect antidote to the lengthy pre-battle stages that curse most real-time strategy games"**

Multiplayer gaming hasn't seen this much deceit and treachery since *Gauntlet*.

Regardless of the game type, *Conquerors* seemed to maintain its update rate pretty well on a single-channel ISDN connection, but I wouldn't fancy your chances much on anything less than 56K, especially not with the bigger maps. One thing that did become prominent, though, is that the whole thing has a tendency to suddenly grind to a halt once unit and building numbers reach a certain threshold – annoyingly this was usually just as things were about to get interesting. If you have access to a LAN, you might well find this isn't so much the case. But on MSN Gaming Zone or any other Internet-based service, be prepared for more than a few abandoned games.

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Superb new multi-player games • Last Man Standing victory condition

DOWNERS Nobody seems to be playing the new game types • Prone to freezing mid-game on large maps

75 Nothing you haven't seen before, but enjoyable nonetheless



STAR TREK VOYAGER: ELITE FORCE

£34.99 • Activision • Out now

In true *Star Trek* fashion, *Richie Shoemaker* throws on a red jersey and gets himself killed immediately

Raven, the developers of *Elite Force*, certainly know how to make use of id Software's *Quake III Arena* 3D engine. Having already mastered *Quake II*'s engine with *Heretic II* (and almost bringing it back from the dead in the recent *Soldier Of Fortune)*, you would perhaps think they'd know more about id's code than id itself.

That being the case, *Elite Force*'s multiplayer game, set within the boundless confines of Voyager's Holodeck, seems almost as if it has been lifted straight from *Quake III Arena* and given a Federation lick of paint. The types of game on offer; free-for-all deathmatch, team deathmatch and Capture The Flag, follow exactly the same formula as *Quake III,* and along with it is the tier-based botmatch where, alone against computer-controlled enemies, you can fight through a series of multiplayer levels, gaining rank as you go.

Thanks to *Quake III*'s incredible engine, *Elite Force* is equally fast and mighty fine to look at and, although some levels might look as if they've been scraped from id's recycle bin, the ones set across Voyager itself (simulated, of course) feel much more in tune with the game. One Capture The Flag level, where players can transport from Voyager to a Klingon ship is one of the best, but it's a theme that should have been carried across more of the levels. The good news is that Raven is already creating more maps, which should be with us… right about now. (Check Raven's site at www.ravensoft.com/eliteforce for updates.)

A CHANGE OF PACE

Some people have been overly critical about the *Elite Force* weapons and, in a sense, a few do border on the absurd. In the series itself, we only ever see hand phasers and rifles in action, so the new ones created for the game take away a sense of being there. But, saying that, they are diverse and spectacularly effective with vapour trails and explosions lighting up the corridors and access tunnels of each level.

"*Elite Force* is very playable online. Even with the effects turned up high, we still racked up a few kills on a bog-standard modem"

Considering all the pyrotechnics and player models running around, *Elite Force* is remarkably playable online. Even with most of the effects turned up high, we still managed to rack up a few kills on a bog-standard modem, at least until the Americans woke up and slowed the whole Internet to a crawl. But those with high-speed connections won't have anything to worry about. And if you've happily run *Quake III* online, *Elite Force* should play just as well.

One aspect where *Elite Force* does score highly is the way in which each game can be configured. By default, the Holomatch has the pace of *Quake III*, but for those who want to make use of the function to lean around corners and play a tense game of cat and mouse, a slower speed setting will do the trick.

Overall *Elite Force* is, for *Star Trek* fans at least, just as good as *Quake III*. In fact, so similar is it to *Quake III* that apart from the uniforms and weapons, it's hard to tell the two apart – and you could argue that *Elite Force* doesn't feel enough like *Star Trek*. The major difference between *Quake III* and *Voyager,* however, is that *Voyager* has a stunning single-player game and *Quake III* doesn't. Taking that into account, *Elite Force* is almost two games in one and, if you think of its *Holomatch* as a bonus, you can't go far wrong. PCZ

PCZ VERDICT

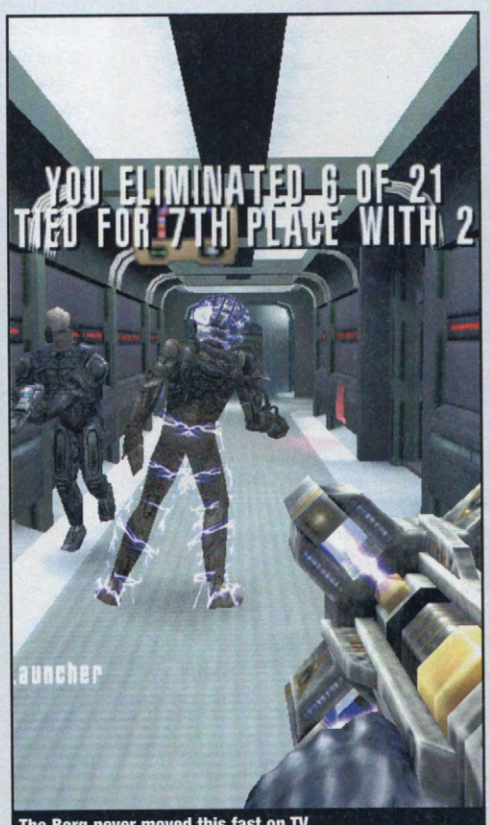
UPPERS Vastly configurable • Easy to set up and join games • Very similar to *Quake III* • You can kill Neelix again and again and again

DOWNERS Modem users can expect laggy play • Not enough truly great levels • Very similar to *Quake III*

79 ***Quake III Voyager*** **might have been a better name for it**



One Neelix is bad enough.



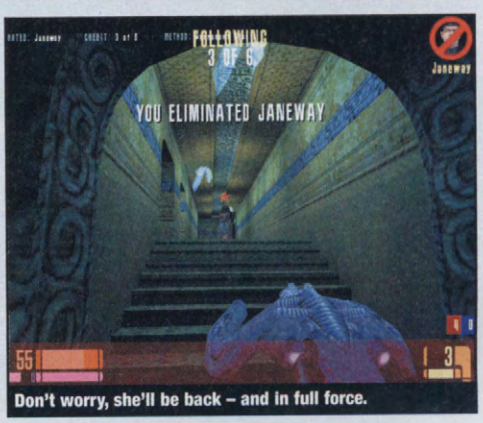
The Borg never moved this fast on TV.



Fighting across *Voyager* is the most fun.



Talk about a bad shot.



Don't worry, she'll be back – and in full force.



Freeze-ray – truly chilling


Narrow gangways over lava and other such delights make this game fast and furious.

UNREAL4EVER TOURNAMENT V6.0

Free from **www.planetunreal.com/u4e/** (28Mb) • Requires fully updated version of *Unreal Tournament* • Available now

Unreal4Ever is a fun add-on for *Unreal Tournament* that came very close to not being reviewed at all. At 28Mb it's medium sized, so shouldn't be a problem, but the recommended servers proved troublesome and supplied files that wouldn't work. In the end, it was the server at **www.dangerous-minds.net** that dished up the goods, and was a fairly fulfilling meal.

The main benefit to installing *Unreal4Ever* is the huge range of extra weapons. You also get five respectable extra maps, but the weapons are the real stars. However, the team who dreamt them up must have been ingesting awesome amounts of wacky chemicals – why else would somebody take the illustrious *PC ZONE* "Best FPS 2000" and give it a tomahawk, a shrink-ray and a cute dolly that explodes with the force of a small nuclear bomb? Bizarre is a word that springs to mind – and in capital letters, too.

OK, so we've established that *U4E* is a tad strange, but it's also good fun. Even dedicated fans of the outstanding *Unreal Tournament* have no chance of taking this game too seriously. It's just absolutely impossible to be butch when your opponent is about to smack you into oblivion with a flesh-bomb.

In short, *U4E* is a nifty *UT* add-on that's worth some download effort. It has one server online and is definitely silly, but since when was fun a crime? Get it, if you can find it.

Tony Lamb

PCZ VERDICT 69%

CATCH THE CHICKEN BETA V1.1

Free download from **www.planetquake.com/q3ctc** (895K) • Full version of *Quake III Arena* required • Available now


After three... catch the chicken, if you can.

Not all mods are huge downloads, and not all of them are as complex as *Counter-Strike* or any of the other hyper-real add-ons. *Catch The Chicken* is probably one of the most ridiculous examples, although it's reasonably good fun and it's less than a 1Mb download from your local website.

It's been around a while, but this incarnation for *Quake III* is the latest and it follows exactly the same formula. In free-for-all mode you have to find the chicken that's running unhindered around the map and then hold onto it for as long as possible. Every five or ten seconds (you can set the limit) you hold the chicken, you get a frag.

Everyone else has to track you down, kill you, steal the chicken and run off to hide somewhere – and that's about it. Although the clever twist is that you can't do damage to anyone but the chicken carrier, so you can let loose with all those high-impact weapons at close range without fear of the backdraft. You can also drop the chicken just before you die. Even if you've only got one per cent of health left, you're not going to take any more damage until you get your feathered friend back.

Still in its early days, the developers are promising a team-based version of the game soon, which should add another dimension to a one-trick pony that's guaranteed to break the ice at parties. The other thing they need to sort out is the bug that means you have to play in enclosed levels. Try any of the 'space' maps in *Quake III* and the chicken plunges into the void never to be seen again.

Dave Woods

PCZ VERDICT 60%


The chickencam. When you're holding the bird, you drop feathers to alert the hunters.


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Be a Control Freak!
Imagine if you could control your life as well as you can control your gaming destiny with Gravis. Game pads and joysticks with the look, feel and power you crave but without the silly prices. Be a control freak – from just £7.99 to £35 – at electronics boutique, GAME and other game retailers.
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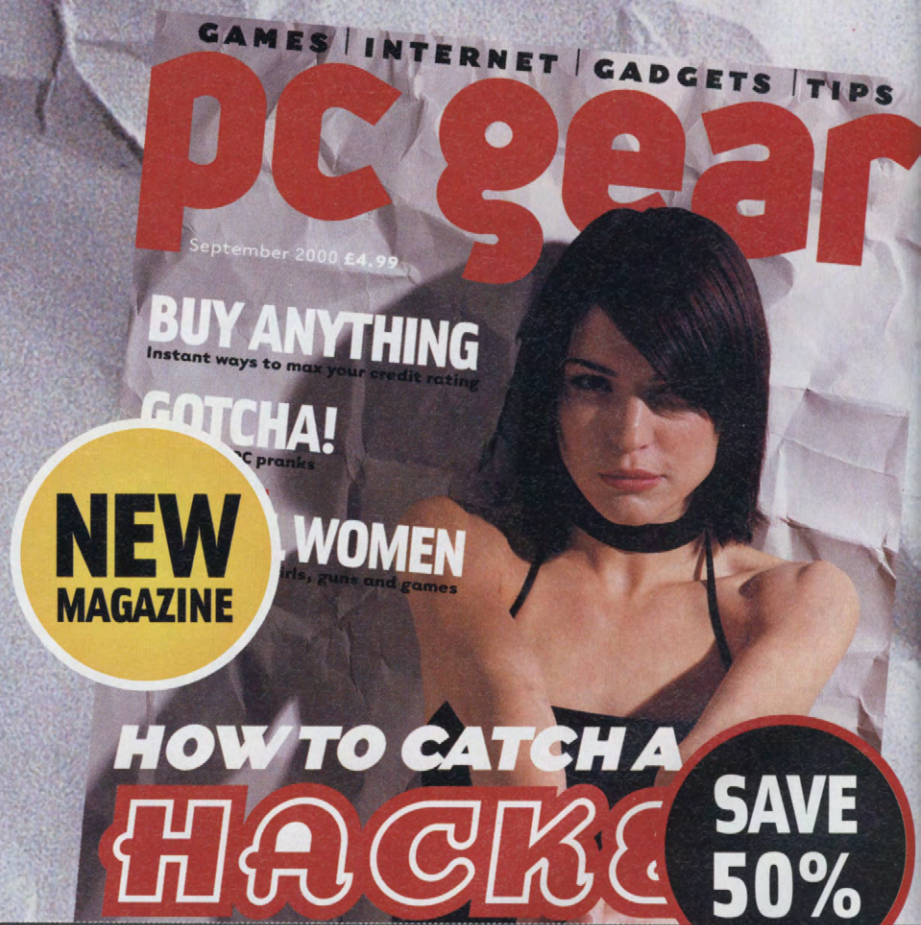
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NOX QUEST V1.2

Free download from www.westwood.com • Out now • Full version of *Nox* required

Phil Wand tries out Westwood's free multiplayer add-on that aims to beat _Diablo II_ at its own game

Poor old *Nox*. Released after *Diablo* but before *Diablo II*, it was always seen as little more than an appetiser: an electronic hors d'oeuvre, served to tickle the taste buds before a more substantial main course. Some of this came about because the game lacked the power of rivals to steamroller your life – fascinate you, terrify you, make you skive from work – but mainly because it was called *Nox* and not *Diablo II*. Sadly, the online world wasn't prepared to surface for anything less.

Of course, there were other things. The game suffered from a woefully one-dimensional single-player mode, and multiplayer sessions were always hack 'n' slash affairs with none of the team spirit and camaraderie evident in *Diablo*. So after listening to a growing number of disenchanted *Nox* players, Westwood set about creating a monster-sized add-on, *Nox Quest*, to address the absence of co-operative play that had made its chief competitor so hugely successful.

And here it is, packaged into a single 26Mb file, with between one and six players now able to help each other out in multiplayer quests – the addition of teamplay enhancing the original so drastically that you can't help but wonder why it wasn't made like this in the first place. Every map and its elements – treasure, monsters, puzzles, obstacles and the like – are sewn together seamlessly and randomly and get progressively more difficult as each player's skills develop. The end result is that no two games of *Nox Quest* feel even remotely alike.

"Every map and its elements are sewn together seamlessly and randomly and get more difficult as player's skills develop"

Predictably, *Nox Quest* suffers the same fate as the game it seeks to imitate. Whereas with *Diablo* there was a real sense of achievement in dealing with the bad guys, confrontations in both *Diablo II* and *Nox Quest* leave you unfulfilled. You often find yourself zigzagging around cleared-out map segments, picking up gold pieces and stuffing them into your pockets before the other people in your party get their dirty mitts on them. It is hardly the stuff of teamwork.

Then there's the core gameplay and its striking similarity to *Gauntlet*. The primary task for each map is the destruction of monster-emitting obelisks with the emphasis being on high scores, if you combine this with the fact that you're not able to injure your teammates, *Nox* begins to feel as though it's lost touch with its role-playing roots. Whether this is a negative thing depends on how you feel about blurring the line between RPG and arcade. But as this add-on is entirely free, we can only suggest that you quit reading this and go find out for yourself. PCZ



If you're not careful your mates will nick all the best stuff.



At least it's easier to get a game than with *Diablo II*.

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Fast-paced co-operative play • No problems connecting

DOWNERS A limp role-playing experience • Nowhere near as popular as *Diablo II*

61 Too little too late



Look you can even pick your own beard or 'tache.



Not quite as good looking as *Diablo II*, but then you don't need a 3D card.



The innovative line of sight model works wonders underground.

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Great attention to detail. Crap choice of weapon.



Water, but not for swimming in. The trusty AK-47 on song.

STRIKE FORCE BETA V1.40

Out now • Free download (104Mb) from **www.planetunreal.com/strikeforce**
• Full updated version of *Unreal Tournament* required

PCZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

Last month's beta 1.27 of *Counter-Strike*-style mod *Strike Force* for *Unreal Tournament* came under the *PCZ* microscope and was found to be generally good, but lacking in a couple of areas. Although this was enough to push it off the must-have list to a still respectable 75 per cent score, the mod obviously had huge potential, and silent prayers were offered in the hope that the next update would solve its niggling faults.

Happily, someone was listening because this latest incarnation is a definite improvement. In fact, although still missing some elements, the game has come on in leaps and bounds, providing a hugely enjoyable experience all round.

There are many new maps and each is superb – a great blend of dark, foreboding alleyways, obstacle-strewn open spaces and enough building interiors to keep the keenest SAS-dreamer happy. Being ultra picky, it could be said that they are too dark, because I was always under the impression that terrorists also operate in daylight – but this isn't an insurmountable problem. It might not do anything for the image of the lone gamer huddled over his or her PC in a darkened room, but you can't have everything.

Strike Force Beta 1.40 has a sense of being much more 'together' than 1.27. It's still hampered by a simple manual and limited choice of equipment, but the gameplay is far superior. There were none of the previous installation problems and the mod doesn't mess about with your *Unreal Tournament* start-up any more either – which is a major thumbs up, although you'll need to remove any previous versions before you install this one. The sound effects, locations and weapons are spot-on and contribute to a very worthwhile *Unreal Tournament* add-on. It even shows your heartbeat on screen and your physical abilities will be affected accordingly – great stuff.

Tony Lamb

PCZ VERDICT 83%

DIASPORA

Out now • Free download (11Mb) from **www.netdiaspora.com**

Take the principle of *Elite*, add a small user front end, make it a free download and you've got *Diaspora*.

Elite was such a cool game in its day that if anything claims to be based on it, I dive into it with great joy. Shame really, because *Diaspora* is absolutely nothing like *Elite* – oh, OK, so it has the principles of space trading and battle, lots of planets to visit and the chance to become a trading tycoon or bounty hunter. However, the challenge in *Diaspora* is not one of lightning reflexes and skill that typified *Elite*, but more one of conquering your boredom and the amazement that anybody ever bothers to play it for more than a few minutes.

You see *Diaspora* is neither one thing nor the other. While games such as *Planetarion* make no effort to hide the fact that they are slow-moving browser games, *Diaspora* tries to hide this fact under some not-so-glossy screens and pathetic sound effects.

Add to all this the fact that if you do play it and do manage to make a fortune, you might actually be able to afford a ship that you actually can see on screen. It still won't actually move or anything, mind you. Oh, but there are competing guilds and factions and bounties you can collect, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah... Look, just save yourself the effort and don't bother playing this. It might be free, but so is a kick in the head if you go to the Kop dressed in a Manchester United shirt – and at least then you might get on TV.

Jed Norton

PCZ VERDICT 35%



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excessive force



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ONLINE SECURITY PART 2: FIREWALLS

SOFTWARE ROUND UP

If you think your PC is a party town for crackers, the only answer is a firewall. But what does it do, and which one do you want? *Phil Wand* has the answers

You've probably heard the term a thousand times now: *firewall*. But what exactly is it? And what does it actually do? Essentially, a firewall is a way of keeping the doors on your PC closed to intruders – whether they are hackers, nutters, or just plain curious. When you connect to the Internet, your computer's arteries and veins pump with data from remote machines all over the planet: SMTP, HTTP, FTP and other network gabble is free to arrive at and depart from unseen entrances and exits deep inside Windows.

Worried? A firewall can stop trespassers dead in their tracks. It removes freedom of movement by watching traffic as it comes and goes, blocking access and alerting you to unauthorised access whenever the need arises. It can be a stand-alone application, used to keep single computers protected from interlopers, or it can be a complex system put in place by a business to secure their network from the outside world.

What we'll be looking at here is the former category – personal or 'desktop' firewall products designed for home users. The criteria is simple: they need to be easy to configure, intelligent and they need to keep the morons out.

REVIEWS

SYBERGEN PERSONAL FIREWALL

Sybergen's solution provides a desktop based lockdown in less than two minutes, and thereafter begins a 'learning' process common to all modern firewalls. Whenever an application such as *Eudora* or *ICQ* accesses the network, you're alerted to the fact that it is doing so. You can then choose whether to allow the software free access, or to stop it dead in its tracks. *Personal Firewall* writes a detailed log of what comes and goes from your system, and provides useful tools, such as a scheduler and alert system that e-mails you whenever a breach of security occurs.

Who: Sygate Technologies
Where: www.sygate.com
Pros: Easy to use • Easy configuration • Free
Cons: Difficult to integrate with some popular programs
Cost: Free
Score: ★★★★½

NORTON PERSONAL FIREWALL 2000

Norton's offering is a no-brainer for two main reasons: first, it comes predefined with a number of 'trusted' applications, for example, *ICQ* and *Internet Explorer*; and second, it remains the most accessible product here by way of its plain-speaking documentation and easygoing interface. *Personal Firewall 2000* 'learns' the way you use your computer and creates rules for network traffic based on what you do and where you go, and it allows novice users to avoid getting their hands dirty by setting the level of security with a slider.

Who: Symantec
Where: www.symantec.com
Pros: Comprehensive and intelligent • Suits power users and novices
Cons: Costly alongside talented rival *ZoneAlarm*
Cost: US$49.95 (about £33)
Score: ★★★★½

ZONEALARM

ZoneAlarm is simple to use, easy to understand and like Sybergen's product is given away free for personal use. Although the main screen, with its Day-Glo colours and dumpy icons, may look a little frivolous the product works brilliantly and its default set-up gives you all the information you need at a sensible level of security. The product includes several neat features, such as the ability to lock out all Internet access after a specific period of time. Couple this with the fact that they're giving it away, and we have no hesitation in recommending it.

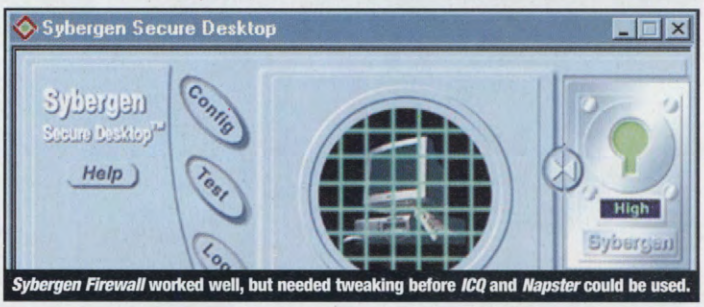
OUR CHOICE

Who: Zone Labs, Inc.
Where: www.zonelabs.com
Pros: Fire and forget • Easy to set up and configure
Cons: None
Cost: Free
Score: ★★★★★

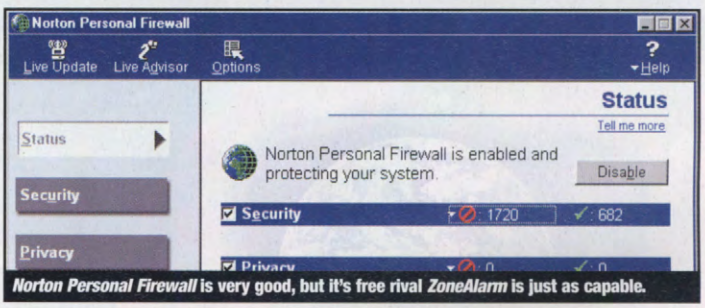
TERMINET

TermiNET was disappointing. Where rivals from Sybergen and Zone Labs create rules dynamically as you do things online – spotting when you use *ICQ* or an FTP client and asking whether you want to grant access – *TermiNET* requires that you create the filters by hand. Even then, you can't create rules specific to particular applications. However, three options are provided as a starting point: stealth, where only outgoing packets are allowed; open, where all packets are free to pass; and closed, where everything is blocked.

Who: Danu
Where: www.danu.ie
Pros: Familiar interface • Informative log
Cons: Doesn't learn traffic behaviour • Can't block by application
Cost: £30
Score: ★★★½½



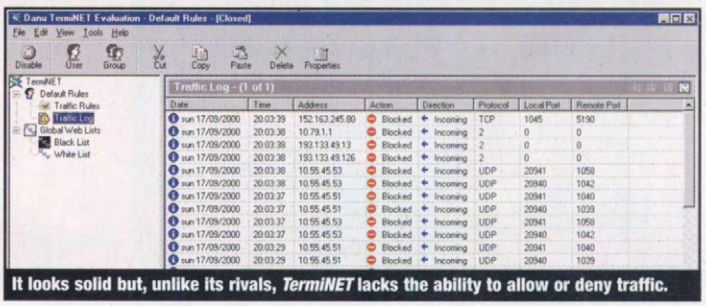
Sybergen Firewall **worked well, but needed tweaking before *ICQ* and *Napster* could be used.**



Norton Personal Firewall **is very good, but it's free rival *ZoneAlarm* is just as capable.**



After many hours spent installing and trying to crack firewalls, *ZoneAlarm* gets the thumbs up.



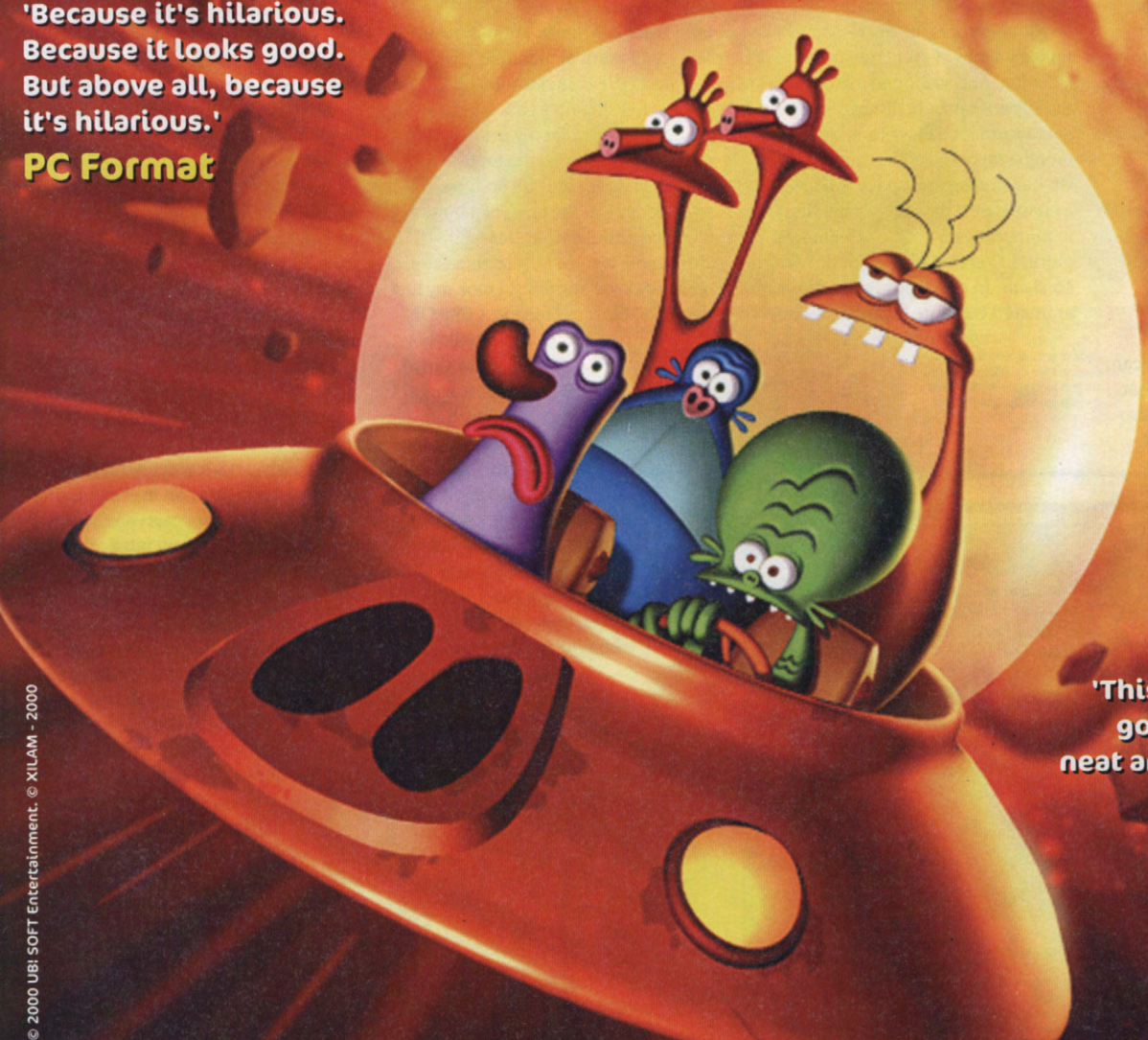
It looks solid but, unlike its rivals, *TermiNET* lacks the ability to allow or deny traffic.

STUPID INVADERS

www.stupid-invaders.com

'...Stupid Invaders makes it abundantly clear that it has what it takes to reanimate the tired, mouldering corpse of the point-and-click adventure game...'
PC Format

'Because it's hilarious. Because it looks good. But above all, because it's hilarious.'
PC Format



'This looks pretty damn good. It's meticulous, neat and seriously funny.'
PC Gamer

www.ubisoft.co.uk

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PC CD ROM

Dreamcast.

ign.com "Best PC Adventure Game at E3"

xilam

Ubi Soft ENTERTAINMENT

STEVE HILL DOES... EVERQUEST PART 2

Just when you thought it was safe to go back into Norrath, *Steve Hill* is out and rampant. The question is would you let this wildebeest loose on your equipment?

There's a theory that if you make a bad cup of tea, you won't be asked to make one again. It's not a premise that I've ever subscribed to and as such, find myself making my fair share of quality brews. The same philosophy can be easily applied to work which, as a freelancer, is probably just as well. Submit poorly written drivel and you'll end up sitting at home picking weevils out of your biscuits, while superior scribes gorge themselves on cash sandwiches and the finest wines available to humanity. Do a decent job and you'll be inundated with work, reducing your life to a frantic cycle of panic, tempered by financial reward.

Unfortunately, this philosophy can, and has, backfired. The upshot is that after last month's traumatic foray into the bewildering world of *EverQuest* (and the subsequent photographic humiliation), the sadists at *PC Zone* have decided to send me on another tour of duty. However, not content to simply let me keep my head down and do my time as best I can, they have actually come up with a devious assignment. It was therefore with some glee that they delivered my task in a *Big Brother*-style: go online as a woman, infiltrate a guild and attempt to marry an unsuspecting man. Thanks, lads.

People in unusual jobs sometimes reflect back to apocryphal meetings with career officers at school, and the unlikely turn of events that followed. I have no such memories, possibly due to my terminal truancy, but if it did take place, I'm pretty certain that not at any time did I express a wish that when I grew up I would like to be paid to impersonate a woman and attempt to marry an unwitting partner in a fantasy world populated by elves, goblins, wizards and lizards. It's probably just as well. Aspiring to be a footballer or a pop star could have been dismissed as youthful fancy, but this would almost certainly have been followed by psychiatric help.

Although, despite my resistance, an unlikely series of events led to this exact situation. And so I found myself back on the edge of Norrath, disheartened and about to adopt a new guise, with last month's Ogre still apparently sat in his shelter staring into space. Choosing a character, it dawned on me that in many ways *EverQuest* is simply a glorified version of the classic cartoon *Mr Benn*. In one episode the titular animated costume fetishist actually assumed the role of wizard, providing an early template for a legion of RPGs.

But this time it was a human guise for me, as I set out to ensnare a red-blooded man. Of course, there's no guarantee that anyone playing as a man is actually male, but that's a whole different Freudian nightmare. Unlike certain *ZONE* contributors, I drew the line at dressing up as a woman, preferring to restrict my transvestism to the game. Opting for the English rose look, a suitable face and body was selected and, at the press of a button, I was a beautiful enchantress called Tanyahide. Naturally, selecting the Queen of Love as a deity, I took my first tentative step into Freeport – City Of Men. Hello boys, come to Tanya. Freeport was a lot busier than Ogreville, and the first potential victim was soon within my sights. Sidling up to a likely looking lad called Kanuven, I politely asked if I could join his guild. "No, invite only," he replied tersely.



➲ **Well, hello boys. Fancy a shag or a bit of a rub? How 'bout it fellas? I'll buy you some food...**

Even a bit of seductive pleading, failed to do the trick. "I'm not into recruiting every lonely person on the server or it would make for a cruddy guild," Kanuven spat.

"But what's a single girl to do?"

"Find a single guy? I have to go."

Well, thanks for nothing, you ugly pimp. Next up was a handsome fellow calling himself Karong, who at least had the decency to bow when I introduced myself. Although he may have been a gentleman, he was definitely not interested and, after a few minutes of stalking him, he managed to lose me in some caves. Shortly afterwards, it began to rain and I was killed by a rat. Not good.

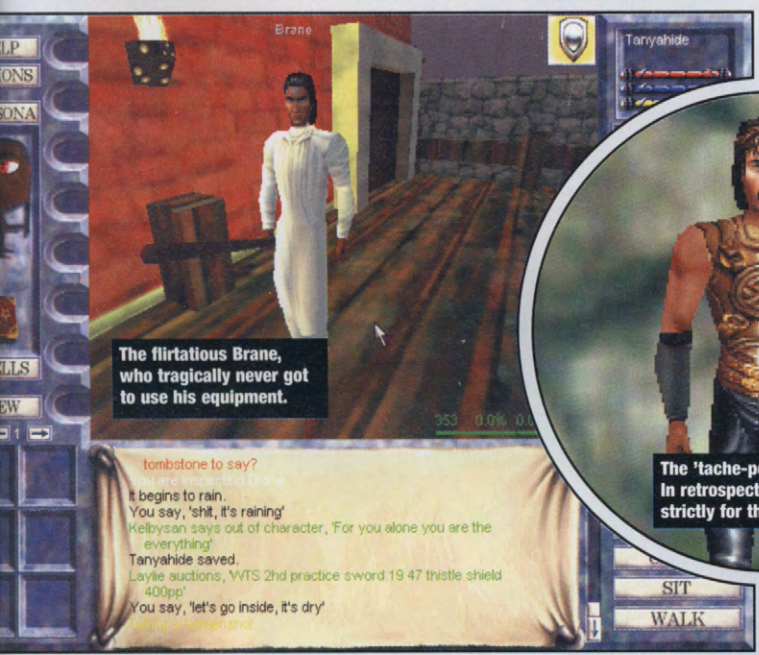
Further non-starters followed, with everything from tedious small talk to blatant sexual advances promptly rebuffed. Some hope was offered by a friendly chap called Damonion, who generously put a few spells on me, and allowed me to join him in slaughtering rats and snakes. Not everyone's idea of a romantic evening out, but a girl's got to take what she can get – even if she is a boiler. It quickly became obvious that it was only ever going to be a platonic relationship, though, and we soon drifted apart. I saw him a few times afterwards, but we didn't really have much to say to each other and, to be honest, if I bumped into him now I probably wouldn't even say hello. Bastard.

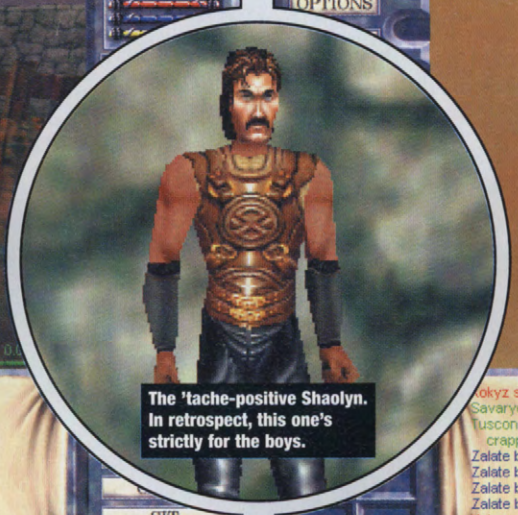
The next failure was Shaolyn, a leather-trousered ape with a Freddie Mercury moustache, who stormed off in a strop with the parting line: "Some people are just too rude and stupid to talk to." Jesus, all I said was "Nice moustache". What is wrong with these people?

Like any decent, self-respecting woman, I became disillusioned with men and turned my charm on a tasty











bit of young crumpet called Sunpuppy. She seemed friendly enough and I'm ashamed to admit that in a moment of weakness I made some improper suggestions. Amazingly, she seemed well up for it, but wisely pointed out that what I was suggesting would not actually be possible within the confines of the game.

Remembering the task in hand, I returned to harassing men, and finally managed to convince someone called Aadiel to join my guild. At last, a result. My new soul-mate then casually announced: "I need to go and buy, ah, something. See ya later." Then he promptly disappeared around the corner, disbanded the guild and was never seen again. Typical man.



Very tempting, but the instructions clearly stipulated men.

Now beginning to develop something of a complex, I asked a young man called Brane if he thought that I was ugly. He reassured me that I wasn't and then began to flirt shamelessly, asking "does my equipment meet your approval?" At which point, I took a step backwards and fell down a three-storey drop.

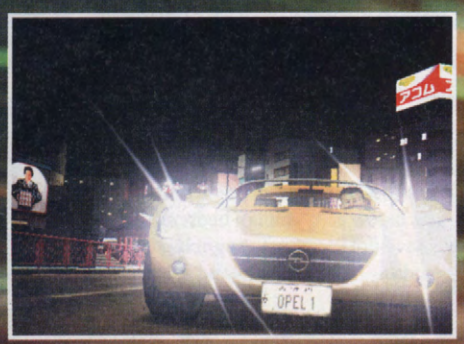
Clearly, this was not to be my night, and with the server now grinding to a lag-ridden mess, I brought the whole sorry affair to an undignified end, having hopelessly failed the task. I left Norrath a bitter woman, sullied by the whole experience. Rejected and humiliated, it was five long hours of my life that I'll never have back. And for what? Not a sausage. PZ



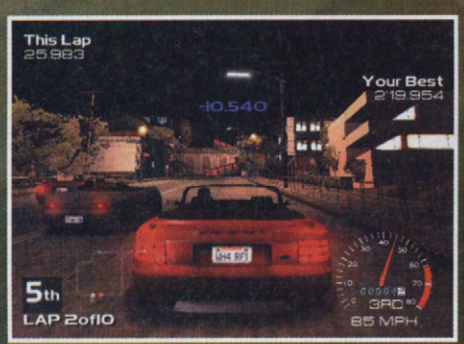
'A RACING GAME ON A SCALE NEVER SEEN BEFORE. INCREDIBLE STUFF'
- 9/10 OFFICIAL DREAMCAST MAGAZINE

IT'S NOT HOW FAST YOU DRIVE...

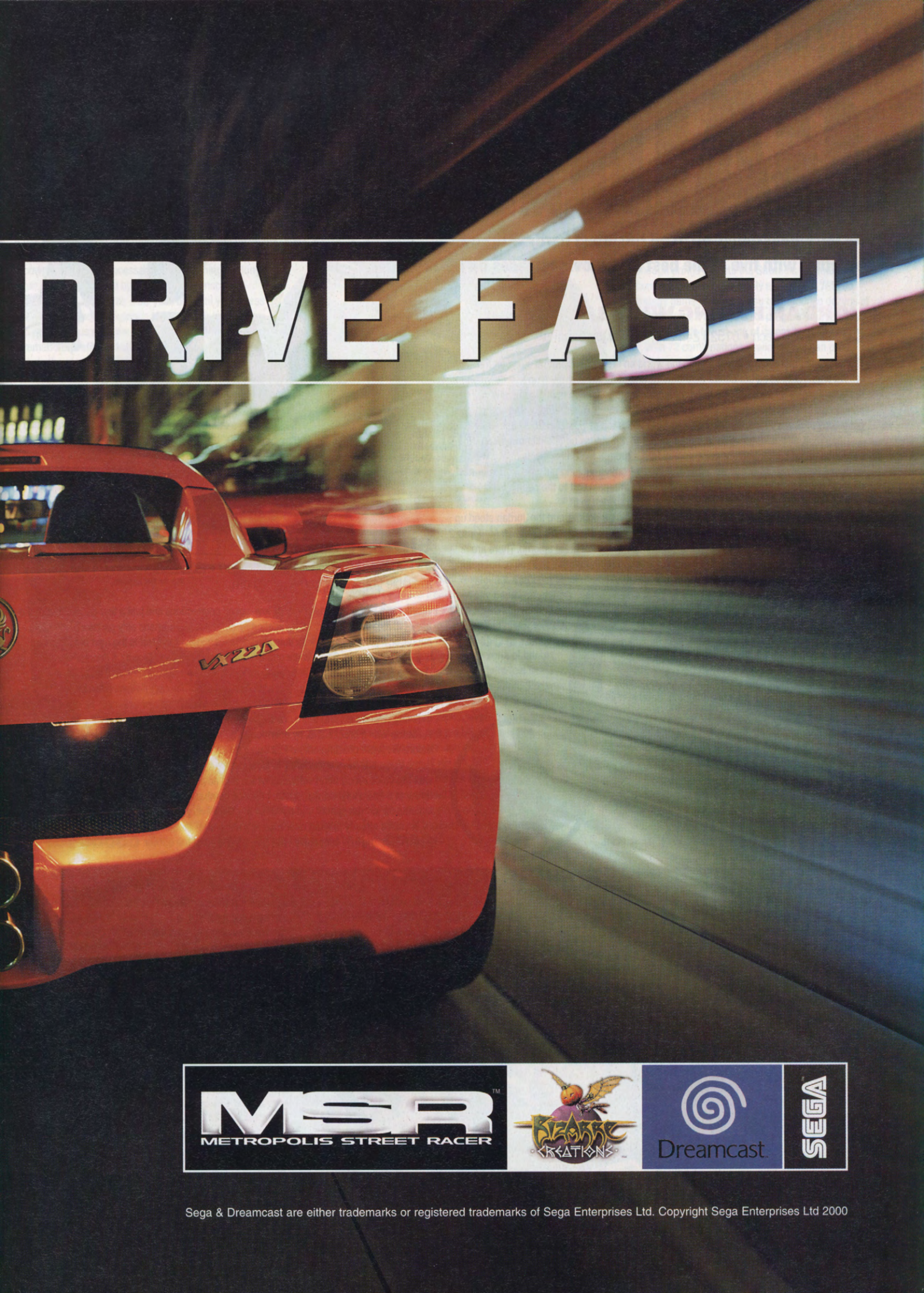
IT'S HOW YOU







'WE'RE STARING INTO THE HEADLIGHTS OF A MODERN CLASSIC. RESPECT DUE' - DC:UK
'THIS IS A DREAM' - MAXIM



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GADGETS

An intriguing round-up of all the latest hardware, good and bad, together with five of the best new movie releases on DVD...

JORDAN RACING WHEEL

★ £39.99 • Joytech • 01525 244 210 • www.joytech.net

The Jordan F1 team isn't exactly setting the world on fire at the moment, so when the official wheel landed on our desks we didn't immediately start jumping up and down on the spot. Forgive us for that. F1 purists might relish the chance to own an officially sanctioned product though. If you suffer yellow mania every other Sunday, and you've got a copy of *Grand Prix 3*, this might go straight to the top of your Christmas list.

Otherwise, all you're going to want to know is how it stands up to the competition. Not bad is the answer. There are no desk clamps and, although the unit is pretty heavy, the suckered bottom might not be enough to keep you from wrenching the wheel off your desk during a particularly rowdy session. The cable from the main unit to the pedals is also ridiculously short – we only just managed to get it to stretch to fit.

However, installation was a doddle, and the Jordan stood up to an afternoon's *Midtown Madness 2* with great aplomb. There are better – and you're not getting force feedback for your cash here – but if you're an F1 fan, this might not bother you in the slightest. ★★★★★



↑ Ripped out of poor old Heinz's cockpit.



→ Speak up! I said, speak up! Oh never mind.

SIDEWINDER GAME VOICE

★ £49.99 • Microsoft • 0345 002 000 • (Shareware version of software available from www.gamevoice.com)

Thanks to a lack of standardisation, low-speed connections and just a few games that make use of it, real-time voice communication is something us humans only partake in over the phone, or, if pushed, in person. Voice communication over the Net is the next big thing and with the Sidewinder Game Voice and the soon-to-be-released DirectX 8 (incorporating DirectVoice APIs), Microsoft is barging its way into new territory as only it knows how.

What you get for your money is a mouse-size USB device, into which the bundled mic, headphones and your speakers connect. You can switch from speakers to headset without messing with wires, and there are six buttons for talking to individuals or teams online.

Setup was a breeze and, by downloading the odd patch for the odd game, it wasn't long before we were chatting online to a bunch of idiots. Unless you have high-speed access, Game Voice will have a tendency to slow games down, but what we found more impressive was the voice recognition software, which had no problem translating every accent we threw at it into a keyboard shortcut. In space combat and simulation games, mumbling 'shields up' or 'full speed' had the desired effect every time.

If you're already playing online games faster that modems allow, Game Voice is well worth investing in – especially with DirectX 8 around the corner. ★★★★★

DVDS

BEING JOHN MALKOVICH

★ £17.99 • Certificate 15 • Columbia Tri-Star

Without doubt the weirdest, most original and most wonderful Hollywood-produced comedy in recent years, *Being John Malkovich* might not give you a true insight into the mind of one of America's most unconventional stars, but it will give you new-found confidence in the possibilities of commercial cinema. Directed by Spike Jonze (who appears as an actor in *Three Kings*, also reviewed this month), the film explores childish fantasies, moral dilemmas and philosophical issues (and gives you the chance to see Cameron Diaz looking ugly). John Cusack plays a puppeteer who discovers a gateway into Malkovich's mind and sets up business letting other people experience it. Following the most illogical of premises to their logical conclusions, the film includes so many twists and stretches its bizarre ideas so far, you keep expecting it to fall flat on its face. How the Hollywood fat-cats gave this the go ahead will remain a mystery, and a great source of joy.

EXTRA FEATURES Trailers • Notes • Spike Jonze interview • Spoof documentary

★★★★★



DVD OF THE MONTH

THUNDERBIRDS VOL 4

★ £15.99 • Certificate U • Carlton

As with all cult classics, *Thunderbirds* is something you either love or couldn't care less about. As a trip down memory lane and a glimpse into the future from the '60s, it remains as entertaining as ever – especially since it's one of the few children's programmes where the characters endlessly smoke. But the stars of the show are the International Rescue vehicles, which we only see about 20 minutes into each show, before which time we have to endure bloated heads, lolling dummies and sequences of the cast getting into their craft. This collection includes four episodes: *Vault Of Death*, *The Mighty Atom*, *City Of Fire* and *The Imposters*. Watch one a week and you'll be enthralled, do them in one sitting and you'll want to bash your brains against a wall.

EXTRA FEATURES Gerry Anderson biog • Parker & Penelope feature • printable DVD-ROM diagrams

★★★★★



SIDEWINDER FORCE FEEDBACK 2

£84.99 • Microsoft • 0345 002 000 • www.microsoft.com/sidewinder

It's odd when you think about it, but joysticks are actually dying out as useful control devices. Who still uses them? Flight sim nuts, the occasional space jockey and advertising bods with no ideas but a large cocaine budget and a phone number for 'Tits Oot' Modelling Agency. Anyhow, Microsoft has been trying to keep the things alive (despite their strange range of alternative control jobbies) thanks to innovations such as Force Feedback.

The problem with the Force Feedback sticks is their size. They're too big. Have you seen how much space they take up on the desk? Also, this new design does tend to look like a large black cowpat with an unnecessarily knobbly thing sticking out (an image not helped by the infra-red sensor that makes it act as limp as a 90-year-old until you caress it – at which point it springs to life in your hand).

On the plus side, the actual vibration malarkey is remarkably refined. Although most games just tend to do the standard 'jerk your wrist like a two-dollar whore' routine at take off, landing and when firing a gun, the test software does hint at more subtle uses.

In the end it's still just a novelty thing, though, unless game designers actually start making effective use of the thing. I'm sure the folks behind the *Lula* series can think of something. ★★★☆☆



Bigger, but not necessarily much better

SIDEWINDER STRATEGIC COMMANDER

£59.99 • Microsoft • 0345 002 000 • www.microsoft.com/sidewinder

Microsoft, in its infinite wisdom, is always coming up with wonderful ways of *supposedly* simplifying our lives. If it's not a bugged operating system, it's some weird contraption that is supposed to aid our gaming experiences, which funnily enough brings us onto the Strategic Commander.

The concept behind it is actually a good one. With so many strategy games requiring you to memorise dozens of key combinations, it allows you to program multiple-button commands to just one of its easily-accessible keys. With 72 combinations available, you can pretty much throw your keyboard into the dustbin once you've programmed and saved profiles for all your favourite RTSs. However, trying to remember which button does what is almost as confusing as using keyboard combinations, and the move functions (up, down and rotate) are so sensitive you end up totally disorientating yourself initially. You do get used to it though, and the fact that you can execute complex orders at the touch of a button does give you a slight advantage in multiplayer games.

Although it's hardly an essential piece of hardware, it's worth investing in if you're truly a hardcore RTS fanatic, have a great memory, and spend most of your life online playing people called Sergeant Slaughter at games such as *C&C: Red Alert 2*. ★★★☆☆



When is a mouse not a mouse?

FLIGHT SIM YOKE USB

£109 • CH Products • 001 760 598 2518 • www.chproducts.com



Not cheap, but a decent bit of kit.

Personally we've never been able to see the point of yokes (aside from which it's a stupid word. Considering both how most of them are treated and where the biggest market for them is, they should be called 'yanks'). Flight sim fans, and I'm talking about civilian flight sims here, the ones without guns, missiles, bombs and other fun stuff, love these sorts of things, though. Anything that makes them feel like a real pilot is fine in their book and the Flight Sim Yoke from CH Products is probably as fine as they come. It's certainly got enough buttons, levers, knobs and switches to cover most needs, and the USB connection makes set up a pain-free process (although we had slight problems with calibration – but, for all we know, that may have been down to our old machines, the curvature of the Earth or the three quarts of vodka we imbibed at lunch).

Its only real problem is the clamp used to secure it to your table. If your desk has smooth edges, you might as well forget it. The slightest tug backwards and the whole thing is in your lap. Other than that, a nice bit of kit. ★★★☆☆

BUY ONLINE FROM WWW.BLACKSTAR.CO.UK www.★.co.uk

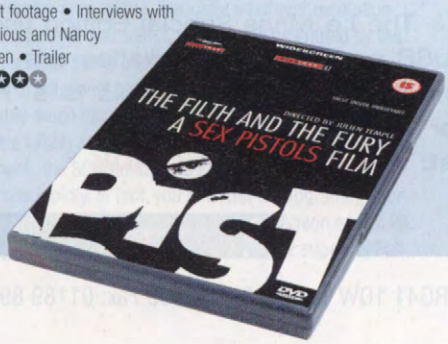
THE FILTH AND THE FURY

£19.99 • Certificate 18 • Film Four

The Sex Pistols *are* punk and, despite a ropey debut in *The Great Rock 'n' Roll Swindle*, director Julien Temple has finally laid the ghost to rest with a warts 'n' all documentary which is full of the Pistols and thankfully devoid of arch puppeteer Malcolm McLaren. Unfortunately, in the process, the Pistols are taken strangely out of context. It's a fascinating insight into the individuals, but we can't help thinking it could have been a lot better. Still, pump up the music to full volume, open your windows and treat the world to a full-on rendition of *God Save The Queen*. You can't help but get nostalgic for a time when the airwaves weren't clogged up with little girls like Billie Piper.

EXTRA FEATURES Director's commentary • Exclusive concert footage • Interviews with Sid Vicious and Nancy Spungen • Trailer

★★★★☆



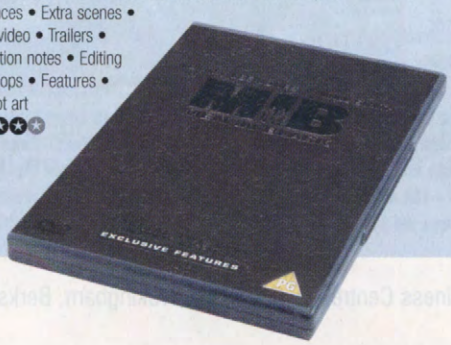
MEN IN BLACK – LIMITED EDITION

£24.99 • Certificate PG • Columbia Tri-Star

Amazing special effects, a tight script and the partnership of old hand Tommy Lee Jones and new recruit Will Smith works wonders for this sharp, action-packed and often hilarious blockbuster from 1997. Full of gadgets and aliens, the effects rarely get in the way of the charismatic acting from Smith and Jones and the film keeps up a frantic pace. This two-disk limited edition offers a good deal more than an hour-and-a-half's entertainment. A thousand pieces of concept art may be overkill, but the scene deconstructions and innovative editing workshops make this package worthwhile. All that's missing is a bucket of popcorn.

EXTRA FEATURES Widescreen and full screen modes • Audio and visual commentaries • Scene deconstructions • Anamorphic sequences • Extra scenes • Music video • Trailers • Production notes • Editing workshops • Features • Concept art

★★★★☆



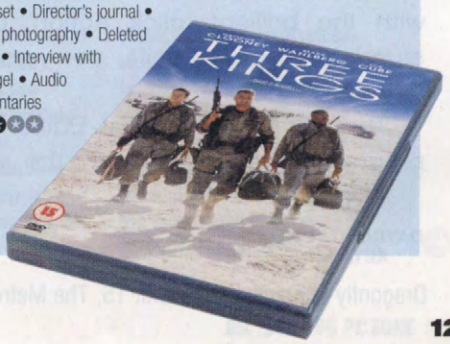
THREE KINGS

£17.99 • Certificate 18 • Warner Home Video

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HARDWARE

Pick a card, either card. They're both pretty good, says *Tim* 'the magician' *Ponting*

HERCULES 3D PROPHET II MX

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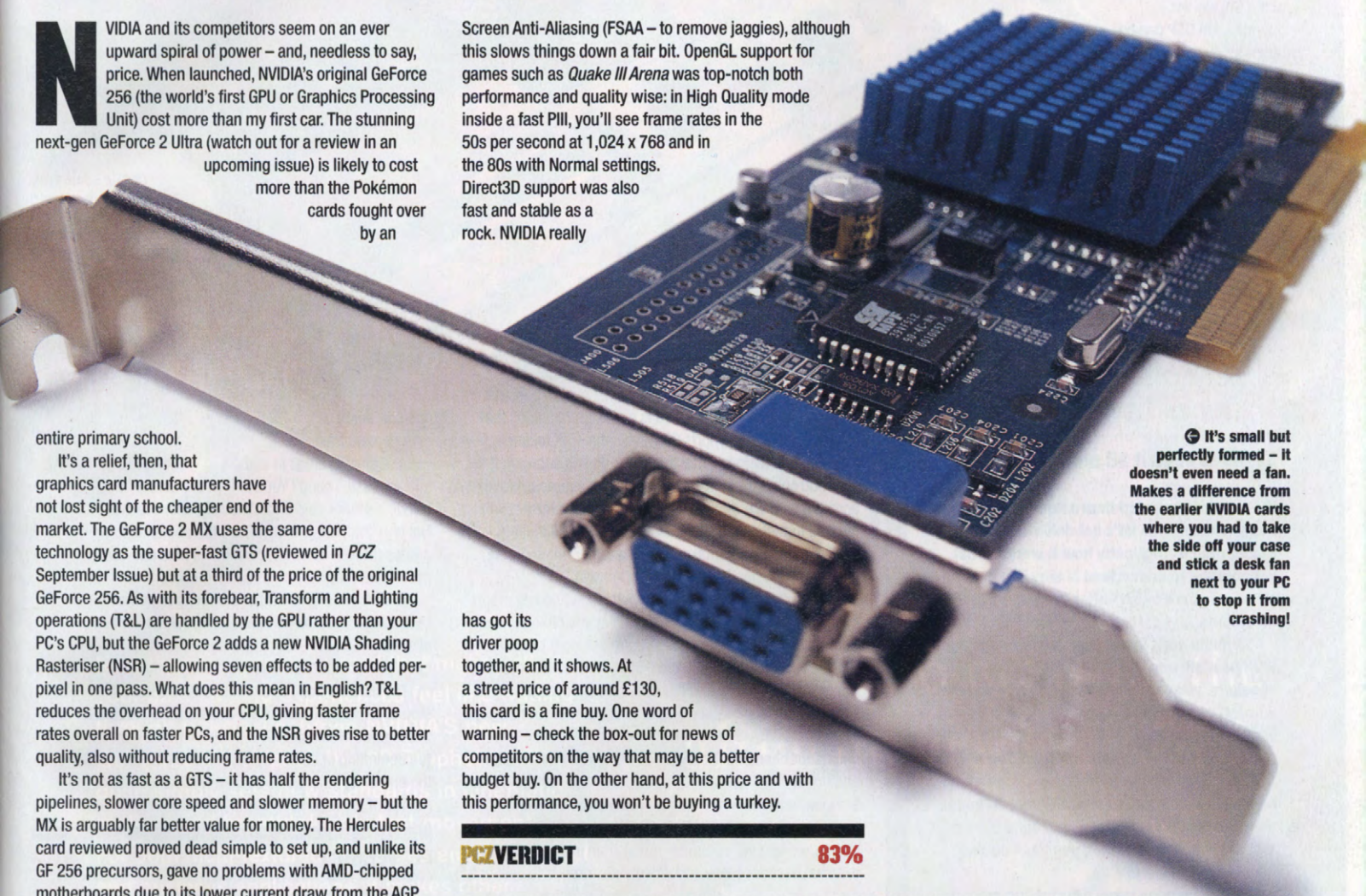
NVIDIA and its competitors seem on an ever upward spiral of power – and, needless to say, price. When launched, NVIDIA's original GeForce 256 (the world's first GPU or Graphics Processing Unit) cost more than my first car. The stunning next-gen GeForce 2 Ultra (watch out for a review in an upcoming issue) is likely to cost more than the Pokémon cards fought over by an entire primary school.

It's a relief, then, that graphics card manufacturers have not lost sight of the cheaper end of the market. The GeForce 2 MX uses the same core technology as the super-fast GTS (reviewed in *PCZ* September Issue) but at a third of the price of the original GeForce 256. As with its forebear, Transform and Lighting operations (T&L) are handled by the GPU rather than your PC's CPU, but the GeForce 2 adds a new NVIDIA Shading Rasteriser (NSR) – allowing seven effects to be added per-pixel in one pass. What does this mean in English? T&L reduces the overhead on your CPU, giving faster frame rates overall on faster PCs, and the NSR gives rise to better quality, also without reducing frame rates.

It's not as fast as a GTS – it has half the rendering pipelines, slower core speed and slower memory – but the MX is arguably far better value for money. The Hercules card reviewed proved dead simple to set up, and unlike its GF 256 precursors, gave no problems with AMD-chipped motherboards due to its lower current draw from the AGP slot it sits in. That was highly annoying first time around.

Benchmarking showed its all-round prowess; NVIDIA's Detonator 3 driver set now flies like a greased hummingbird. Interestingly, testing on an older AMD K6-III 450 showed the limitations of running a high performance card in a slower machine. Basically, whatever resolution and colour depth you select, a game will be limited by the CPU's ability to pump information about vertices (the corners of polygons) to the 3D card. In this case, frame rates stay much the same until you hit high resolutions (say 1,280 by 1,024) at which point the CPU ceases to be the bottleneck, the 3D's limitations take over and the frame rate drops rapidly. In fact, you're better off upgrading your CPU than 3D card if your machine isn't an Athlon or fast PII.

The image quality is stunning; GeForce 2 supports Full-Screen Anti-Aliasing (FSAA – to remove jaggies), although this slows things down a fair bit. OpenGL support for games such as *Quake III Arena* was top-notch both performance and quality wise: in High Quality mode inside a fast PIII, you'll see frame rates in the 50s per second at 1,024 x 768 and in the 80s with Normal settings. Direct3D support was also fast and stable as a rock. NVIDIA really has got its driver poop together, and it shows. At a street price of around £130, this card is a fine buy. One word of warning – check the box-out for news of competitors on the way that may be a better budget buy. On the other hand, at this price and with this performance, you won't be buying a turkey.



It's small but perfectly formed – it doesn't even need a fan. Makes a difference from the earlier NVIDIA cards where you had to take the side off your case and stick a desk fan next to your PC to stop it from crashing!

PCZ VERDICT **83%**

A TASTE OF THINGS TO COME

More cards are currently rolling off the conveyor belts...

NVIDIA isn't the only chipper fella to realise that we're not all as well-endowed in the wallet department as 'Considerably Richer Than Yow' man. Watch this space for a review of the new PowerVR 3, Kyro-chip-based VideoLogic Vivid! card in the next couple of months. We have one in our greasy palms at this very moment, but the drivers are unfinished and so we're waiting till then to enlighten you.

Also in the pipeline are new cards from ATI – the company famed for its super-cheap, super-value, but somewhat under-endowed Rage and Rage Pro 3D boards. Again, these are on the way to the *ZONE* offices for review, but missed the slot this month. RRPs are likely to be on the high side in this country, but the technology looks spiffing.

VIDEOLOGIC SONICFURY

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BEST BUY

It's been quite a while since we saw a card that could effectively challenge the dominance of the two main gamers' staples – Creative Labs' SoundBlaster Live and cards based on the Aureal 2 chipset, such as VideoLogic's own SonicVortex 2.

As ever, it's the availability of a new all-singing all-dancing chipset that's made it possible – the Crystal 4630 SoundFusion DSP (Digital Signal Processor). Like the EMU 10K1 chip at the heart of the SBLive, the SoundFusion DSP can be upgraded with new drivers utilising its DSP processing in new ways. Creative Labs' *LiveWare* program has seen numerous upgrades over the last couple of years, all of which have added functionality and generally improved performance.

So what exactly does this mean to you, though? Simple. As 3D audio technology improves, the cards can be upgraded in software since the driver routines are not slavishly tied to the chip design. If some bright spark works out how to make it chug along faster, you don't have to buy a new card, just simply download new drivers.

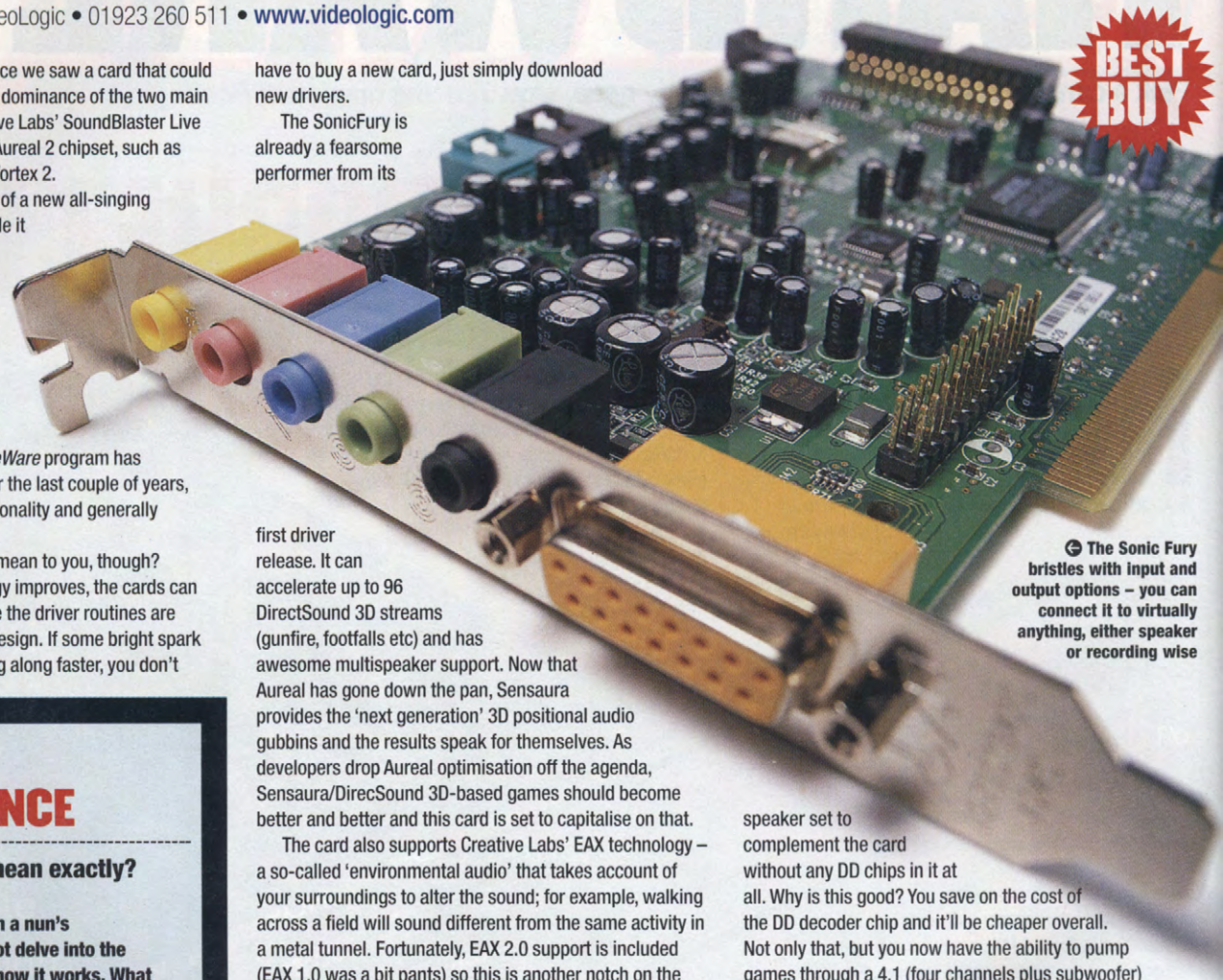
The SonicFury is already a fearsome performer from its first driver release. It can accelerate up to 96 DirectSound 3D streams (gunfire, footfalls etc) and has awesome multispeaker support. Now that Aureal has gone down the pan, Sensaura provides the 'next generation' 3D positional audio gubbins and the results speak for themselves. As developers drop Aureal optimisation off the agenda, Sensaura/DirecSound 3D-based games should become better and better and this card is set to capitalise on that.

The card also supports Creative Labs' EAX technology – a so-called 'environmental audio' that takes account of your surroundings to alter the sound; for example, walking across a field will sound different from the same activity in a metal tunnel. Fortunately, EAX 2.0 support is included (EAX 1.0 was a bit pants) so this is another notch on the bedpost when head-to-head with Creative.

The SonicFury scores against SBLive in two key areas. First of all, it somehow manages to cleverly change its use of the DSP depending on what you're asking it to do. Play a DirectSound 3D game and the DSP optimises itself for this role; play an MP3 file and the DSP uses hardware acceleration of MP3 decoding to take the pressure off your CPU. It also has no fewer than six analogue outputs: the usual four channels (front pair and rear pair) but also an additional two channels for 'subwoofer' and 'centre'. These are clearly aimed at the DVD playback market. With suitable software, Dolby Digital 5.1 decoding can be performed on your computer rather than in an expensive external decoder box – and VideoLogic intends to deliver a speaker set to complement the card without any DD chips in it at all. Why is this good? You save on the cost of the DD decoder chip and it'll be cheaper overall. Not only that, but you now have the ability to pump games through a 4.1 (four channels plus subwoofer) system for meatier games performance.

The fifth and sixth output channels are on a multi-purpose 'jack' socket on the card spine, which can also output an SP/DIF digital signal or even act as an extra pair of inputs for quad recording.

The hardest thing about this review is knowing when to stop. It offers more out of the box than a SoundBlaster Live at the price of the cheapest SBLive variant. It's a product at the beginning of its life-cycle, unlike the SBLive, which is at the end of its innings. As such, it really should take the mantle of 'best gamer's card'. I rest my case, M'Lud.



The Sonic Fury bristles with input and output options – you can connect it to virtually anything, either speaker or recording wise

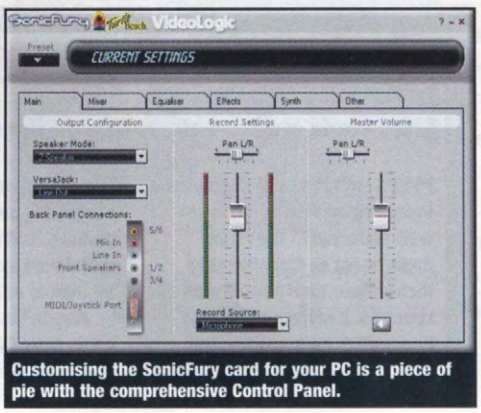
3D AUDIO PERFORMANCE

So what does it all mean exactly?

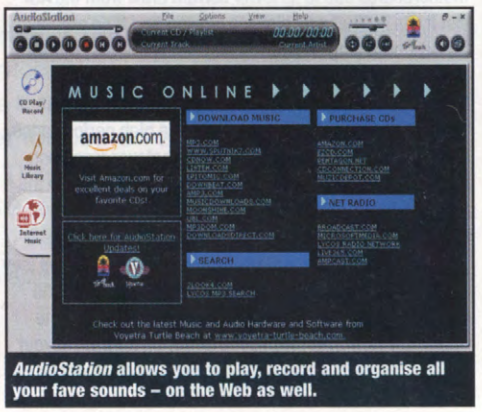
It's more complicated than a nun's undergarments, so let's not delve into the nether regions of exactly how it works. What is important to understand is why it is that some cards are much better for gamers than others are.

3D audio adds to the experience of a game. With headphones – or even better – four speakers, you can hear sound behind you – the whoosh of a warhead as your own gibs fly into your line of sight; the footsteps of the blankety blank who sneaks up behind you in *Counter-Strike* and pops a 9mm round neatly into the nape of your neck. Each one of these 3D audio sounds occupies its own DirectSound 3D 'stream' – so in a gunfight, you can imagine how quickly these pile up.

This technology takes a surprising amount of your CPU power – in the early days of 3D audio, 32 3D streams could take up 50 per cent of your processing power and frame rates dropped to a snail's pace. Faster processors help, but so does a better sound card. Both SoundBlaster Live and SonicFury take most of the burden off your CPU – you'll notice the difference when things go pear shaped on screen and you're under fire from a million directions. Which to buy? I'd go for the one that is as good as the other in driver version 1.0 – the SonicFury should walk it against SBLive when its drivers get upgraded. You read it here first.



Customising the SonicFury card for your PC is a piece of pie with the comprehensive Control Panel.

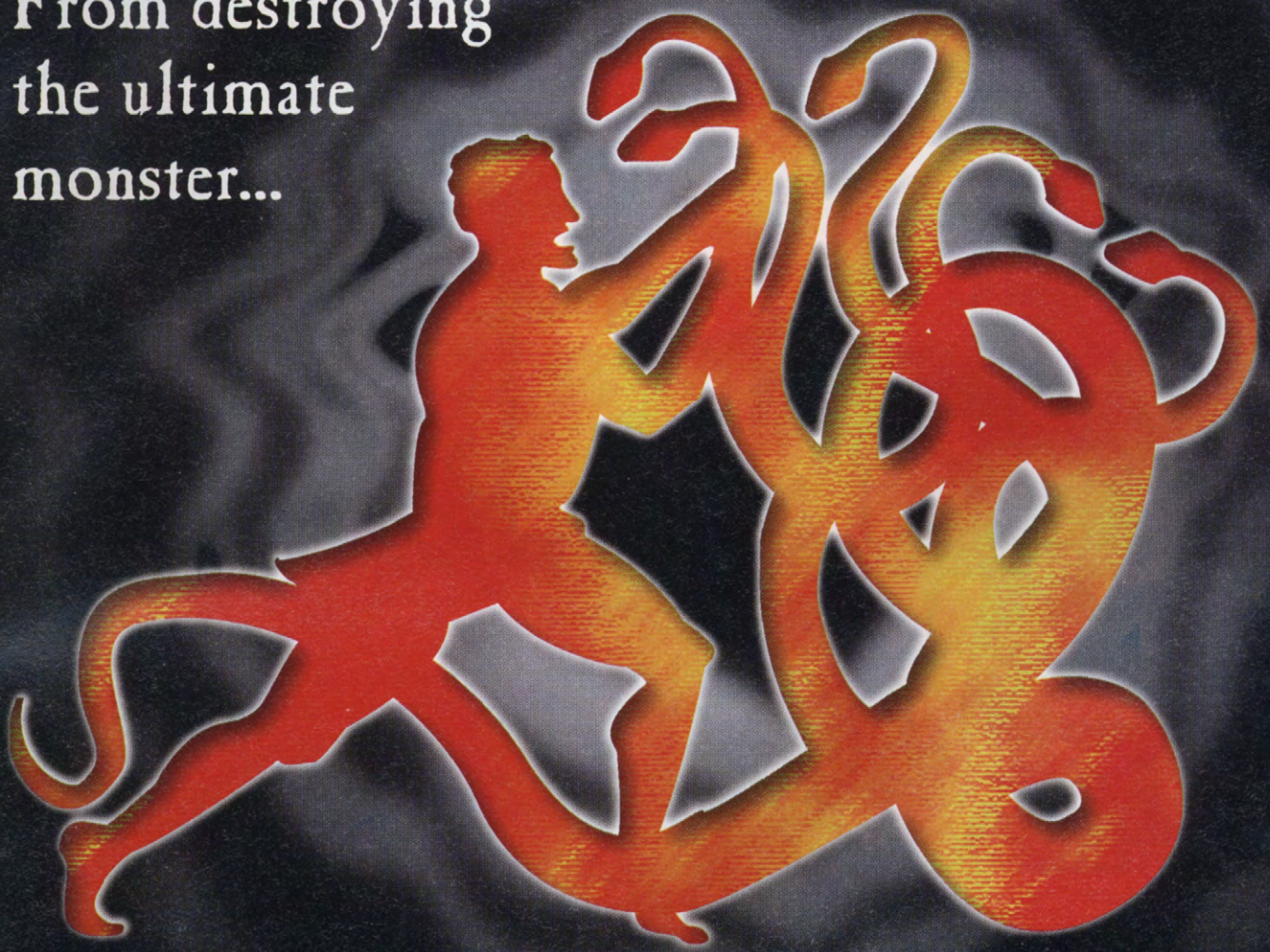


AudioStation allows you to play, record and organise all your fave sounds – on the Web as well.

PCZ VERDICT 91%

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THE GEEK SHOW

They're buried in TV schedules in the early hours or on satellite. In fact, some people don't even know that they exist. *Adam Phillips* sets his video recorder to uncover the ever-illusive videogame TV show...

While everyone in the games industry is seemingly convinced that games have stopped being the pursuit of 'anoraks' and are now 'cool', 'trendy' and 'fashionable', you wouldn't have thought it judging by the videogame TV shows out there. While dedicated music and film shows continue to enjoy prime-time worship from adoring audiences, the poor old videogame TV show can usually only be found lurking in the bottom ends of TV schedules. Or stripped down to mere review slots sandwiched in between an interview with Will Smith and a 'live' performance from Steps on Saturday morning TV.

Despite this brick wall facing videogame shows trying to break into the mainstream TV arena, there are shows out there for dedicated gamers. The main contenders being *Bits* (Channel Four), *Cybernet* (ITV) and *Game Over* (Sky One). Each boasts its own merits and weaknesses and, for the insomniac, can mostly be found hidden on late night TV or on satellite.

Of course, it wasn't always like this – remember *Gamesmaster*? How about *Bad Influence*? They were the first shows to hook onto the then growing phenomena of videogames back in the early '90s and had decent slots on telly. *Gamesmaster* boasted celebrity game challenges and Dominik Diamond carving the guests up with his sarcastic, laddish humour, while *Bad Influence*, a unique blend of technology and gaming, pulled in some six million viewers per episode, despite being presented by Andy Crane.

They might have enjoyed reasonable success, but the videogame TV show's profile seems to have gone rather low key after the initial splash. Why? "Broadcasters and commissioning editors have simply lost interest with videogames," says Steve Keen, *Cybernet*'s producer who also worked on *Bad Influence*.

"To be fair to them, though, especially in *Bad Influence*'s case, which went on for four series, they're under pressure to keep things fresh and new all the time. So I guess they felt it was time for a shuffle around. Nothing lasts forever," adds Keen.

Fair enough, but why are the TV powers-that-be so wary of the videogame format that they seem intent on putting the 'next generation' of videogame shows in late night slots?

"I think you have to look at the advancing age of the commissioners," offers Jonny Ffinch, executive producer on a series of shows for .tv, Sky's technology channel. "These are the people in power, these are the people that decide what gets made and what doesn't, and computer games are not trendy in the obvious way. With computer games, they may think: 'Oh no, this is all a bit scary, anti-social and it's about people who don't necessarily look great. I've never played them myself and I don't know anything about them, so let's not do a videogames show.'"

Cybernet's Keen takes it a step further and says: "In general, the commissioning editors really just don't understand how big electronic and videogame entertainment is." With the likes of PlayStation 2 and Dreamcast sticking their heads above the parapet and continuing the push into the mainstream, this will hopefully change. The BBC is already touting its new show *Bleeding Thumbs* in an early evening, weekday slot which could hopefully turn the image of videogames round in the eyes of commissioning editors if it is a success (see Two Thumbs Up? boxout for more information).

"In general, television commissioning editors really just don't understand how big electronic and videogame entertainment is"

STEVE KEEN, PRODUCER OF CHANNEL FOUR'S *CYBERNET*



From the glorious days of early '90s videogame TV, the *Gamesmaster* himself Mr Dominik Diamond.



Can you find this show on your telly?

But where does all this leave the PC gamer in the big scheme of things? Are you guys being catered for despite the domination of consoles? Or are you going to be pushed on to the sidelines as TV focuses on the mainstream appeal of consoles? "I don't think so," says Keen. "I think the consoles are getting a lot of attention at the moment because they have come on such a huge amount. You expect the PC to continually get faster, as the speed of the PC doubles every 18 months. But every four years, the consoles seem to improve and that's why I think it goes in peaks and troughs. The interest goes back towards the consoles when there is a new load of them being launched and then the focus drifts back to the PC as they, in turn, get even more powerful. At the moment, I think I am right in saying that there has never been a console as powerful as a PC and even when the PS2 is launched over here, that will still be the case..."

Ah, good news indeed. So what about the future for

THE PUNTERS' PERSPECTIVE

So, what do you think of the current crop of TV shows and their possible futures? *PCZ* ventured out into the newsgroups to glean your points of view...

Bill Larcombe says:
"I only really know about *Bits* on Channnel Four and I only watch that because of the presenters – the sad git that I am. *Bits* is OK but, as a PC gamer, I'd like to see more coverage of this area in addition to the console titles – but I guess they've got to appeal to the principal videogame buyers, ie console owners.

As for the future, I think there is scope for TV coverage of not just deathmatches but maybe *Counter-Strike/Team Fortress Classic* with celebrity players (S Club 7 rescuing hostages from Steps... shudder). I guess one thing that would stop the development of more videogame shows is the fear that audience figures wouldn't be that high."

Byron Hinson says:
"From the current crop of TV gaming, my view is that *Cybernet* is by far and away the best of the bunch, even though it doesn't do proper reviews. *Cybernet* shows more in-game footage, without the pointless and boring 'in-jokes' that feature on *Bits*. I'd much prefer a show that just shows the games running and shows off the gameplay."

Nik Lees says:
"Though not loved by all, I'd say *Bits* is the first good computer game programme. It goes out of its way to make computer games look fun, rather than making them seem geeky and sad to the casual gamer. The girls are witty, and the only reason people say they don't know what they are talking about is because sexist male gamers want to keep games 'theirs' and feel threatened by females encroaching on their territory. But hopefully with digital TV catering for minorities and Channel Four going 'yoof', more lively and fast moving shows such as *Bits* will appear."

Simon says:
I think *Cybernet* is on too late and too PC-orientated (*Eh? What's wrong with that?!! – Ed*). *Game Over*, is not too bad. It has decent news coverage, but it's trying too hard to be cool. Plus the presenter clearly doesn't care about games – and why is he always driving a car? It'll take a helluva lot more to make him look cool. As for *Bits*, well, watching those three witches droning on senselessly is enough to put you off."

videogame TV shows in general? Any predictions? "I think it will be channels," says Ffinch. "There may be individual shows coming up like *Bleeding Thumbs* but I think the future will be in dedicated channels."

Keen sees another possible avenue for exploitation – that of real interactivity: "I think people all around the country will be getting online and there will be TV shows that will bring people together for game tournaments and big cash prizes," he offers. "As for just pure videogame shows, I can't see there being a successful one unless you bring in the interactive element that will bring people together and really get them excited about competing against each other. Competition is interesting, but just watching other people playing games isn't..." PCZ

INSOMNIACS UNITE!

What do we think of the videogame TV shows out there at the moment? Are they worth staying up for – or at least taping? *PC ZONE* puts on its slippers, pours itself a cup of Horlicks (and Vodka) and cuddles up on the sofa for a hardcore late night viewing session. Which for once doesn't star Linda Lovelace...



The *Bits* girls, cheap and cheerful, loved and loathed in equal measure by gamers it seems...

BITS

When & Where: Channel Four. New series starting soon. Shown after midnight – check TV listings for more details.

Content: A reviews show that focuses mainly on games for consoles, handhelds and PCs. Gadgets and gizmos are featured from time to time as well. A mandatory (and usually pointless) tips section is also included.

Style: The emphasis is on the mainstream and, while some game geeks may despise the three girls who present it and the format itself, the show can actually be 'fun' to watch. The programme seems to be trying to create more of a genuine TV format centred on videogames instead of a videogame magazine format simply chucked on to the little screen.

Pros: The girls are reasonably attractive and, compared to *Cybernet*'s detached voiceover, they've got loads of onscreen charisma. The show can also occasionally hit the funny bone as well and, especially in its early days, boasted some fairly imaginative ideas for presenting games within a TV format. The show wears its minimal budget well – cheap, cheerful and proud of it.



Bits is the best, but it's still not perfect.

Cons: The reviews can drag on too long with too much emphasis on the tepid storylines as featured in 99.9 per cent of most games, and the show does seem a tad too in love with FMV sequences at times. Also, the show's jokes and skits can sometimes fall flat on their faces. Finally, the programme's research has been inaccurate in the past, for example, *Powerstone 2* – a PS2 game only? No, it's a game exclusive to the Dreamcast, actually.

Score: ★★★★☆

GAME OVER

When & Where: .tv, Sky's technology channel on Thursday at 7:30pm.

Content: Magazine-style format featuring all the usual suspects – reviews, previews and news, covering consoles and the odd PC title. A mandatory (and usually pointless) tips section is also included.

Style: Presenter Andy Collins heads up an eclectic team of pundits in a straightforward reportage style. It's a standard magazine line-up, but the inclusion of a variety of people breaks up the format and stops it from becoming a faceless and generic show like *Cybernet*.

Pros: Well, it's on at a decent time – that's a start. Reviews seem to be fairly spot on and snappy, even if the idea of 'the Assassins', the bods who review the games 'anonymously', seems a little trite and unnecessary.

Cons: It's not on terrestrial TV unfortunately, but as more of us sign up to Rupert Murdoch's Evil Empire (Sky), then this will become less of an issue. Some of the choices for the main backdrop for the show can be more than a little odd. For instance, a river-based tour of London. Why? But we guess it's nice to show something rather than just inside of a sterile studio. The game footage can over-run and some of the Big Feature sections can feel a little on the vacuous side.

Score: ★★★☆☆

CYBERNET

When & Where: Sci-Fi Channel/ITV. Anytime in the early morning hours. Sci-Fi Channel in the evenings. Check TV guide for details.

Content: More magazine-style content this time covering games, multimedia and gadgetry – sort of a *Tomorrow's World* meets videogames. Again, the mandatory and pointless tips section is included.

Style: A rather innocuous CGi robot with a voice-over links the various atypical sections.

Pros: Seemingly more popular with the über hardcore gamer, *Cybernet* does come across as being the most informed show for the PC literate. Reviews feel about the right length and are to the point and decisive when delivering the final verdict. Indeed, it can come across as rather harsh at times, which we like.

Cons: The presentation and on location segments leave you a tad cold with their lack of style when compared to the fast, snappy nature of *Bits*. The technology, Web and multimedia segments can also be distracting for game-only fans at times. The main criticism, though, is the lack of a human presenter. Because *Cybernet* is distributed to many countries all over the world each week, with more than 100 million viewers across the globe, it needs to be redubbed with ease for foreign-speaking territories, hence the graphics. But if we see that robot one more time, we'll put our foot through the sodding screen.

Score: ★★★☆☆

TWO THUMBS UP?

While other channels cower at the idea of a prime-time videogames show, the good 'ol Beeb has bitten the bullet and is bringing us *Bleeding Thumbs* this winter. *PC ZONE* talked to the show's creator to find out more...



"It's not a reviews show," says Jon Riley, the 31-year-old producer of BBC's Bleeding *Thumbs*, when asked to pitch the concept behind the new TV series to *PCZ*. Indeed, the format for *Bleeding Thumbs* is simply based around the idea of competition. For maximum excitement, it features two teams of 'fairly expert game playing punters' playing against each other in five rounds of videogame challenges each week, in order to win a year's supply of games.

The gaming challenges will be made up of new releases, retrogaming and an eight-person multiplayer first-person shooter. "Two of the rounds will be new releases for the likes of DC and PS2 usually – games you haven't seen yet," explains Jon. "So rather than talking about games that are going to be coming out, people will actually see them being played. Because we're an entertainment show, it also means that we won't be looking at things such as role-playing games *(Doh! – Ed)*. We'll be looking at pretty quick-hit console gaming generally – driving, fighting, and so forth – because they make for great competition and this show is all about competition."

> **"We'll be showing pretty quick-hit console games because they make for great competition – and that's what this show is all about"**
>
> JON RILEY

The most intriguing part of the show is the multiplayer aspect, which uses the *Unreal Tournament* engine. The contestants will saddle up and head out into a *Capture The Flag* scenario



in the final round: "What I'm doing is taking the *UT* game engine, but reworking it for TV purposes," Jon continues. "That means that obviously while the FPS view is exciting to play, it is incomprehensible to a viewer. So we are shooting it like a sport."

This means Jon and his team have been busy designing big, open and bright arenas for each show based round a particular theme. As well as featuring the aforementioned *Capture The Flag* scenario, which is more viewer-friendly than a confusing and full-on deathmatch, Jon and co are also putting in a lot of third-person spectator views by placing cameras in the arenas. The idea is that watching BT will be more like watching a footy match: "So the audience knows where they are geographically.

"The characters onscreen will also look like the people playing by placing facial and body skins of the players on to the actual characters," he says. "They will be reasonably realistic, but slightly stylised so you've got that recognition factor for the audience."

As for the actual designs, weapon and game mods, Jon has been enlisting the UK's *UT* mod community to come up with the goods by appealing to them via forums and personal e-mails, and the response has understandably been positive. In the meantime, Jon is still on the look out for potential contestants: "What we are looking for are teams of four people, and it's great if they have something that unifies them, like we have four skateboarders or four hippies, for example," explains Jon. "It's good if they know each other and play together, but if they have something that ties them all together, that's great. So they should put down a brief description of themselves and their mates in an e-mail, send it to us and someone will be in contact."

We look forward to seeing readers on prime time telly. Remember to give us a plug!

Send your application to bleedingthumbs@bbc.co.uk with 'Contestants' in the header. BT should be hitting your screens in January.



Worship the cult of *Bleeding Thumbs* early next year.



TV friendly *Unreal Tournament* stadiums. We can't wait.



We hope they get Alan Hanson in for the post-match punditry.

TROUBLESHOOTER

THE MORALITY OF CHEATING

LEADING YOU ASTRAY Martin Korda



If you're anything like me, you always feel a pang of guilt whenever you cheat at a computer game. But let's face it, it's hardly a crime, is it? After all, there are different degrees of cheating, aren't there? If you use a code to get past a difficult part of a game, it's hardly comparable to say, cheating in an exam. For starters, you don't have to worry about the the prospect of getting hauled up in front of a headmaster and humiliated in front of your peers like a naughty schoolboy. Neither are you going to face recriminations from an angry spouse and lengthy divorce proceedings, just because you're using god mode to complete your favourite FPS. So go on, have a look. You know you want to. After all, it's only a computer game and sometimes cheating a little can get you far.

IN TRUBS THIS MONTH...

136 CHEAT MASTER
The cheater's cheat, Mr Keith Pullin bares his soul and reveals some sneaky little manoeuvres.

137 DEAR KEITH
Filled with agony and gaming woes? Uncle Keith is here to help.

138 DEUS EX
In this second part of our mega player's guide Paul Mallinson reveals the best path to becoming a super spy.

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YOUR HOSTS



Adam Phillips



Keith Pullin



Martin Korda

CHEAT MASTER

Come on then you cheating scabs... let's get your monthly fix

CHEATMEISTER Keith Pullen

ON THE CD



More cheats, tips and solutions on the cover CD this month. Find out what's in store by looking at the Editorial section of your CD-ROM browser.

NEED HELP?

If your problems persist, you can solve them if you...

WRITE TO Dear Keith/Cheat Master, *PC ZONE*, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1P 5FF

EMAIL letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk with **Dear Keith** or **Cheat Master** in the subject line.

BLAIR WITCH VOLUME 1: RUSTIN PARR (DEMO)

Gathering Of Developers

Hit 'F10' during the game and type any of these cheats:

godgames	God mode
moreammo	More ammuntion
goldmode	Secret message

STAR TREK: STARFLEET ACADEMY

Activision

This one never seems to lose popularity with Trekkies, so here are some handy codes to be getting on with:

Type '** tiberius' after the first encounter on mission seven. Close to within transporter range of the Starbase and press 'I'.**

To fire while cloaked select the 'Create Mission' option and select any ship with a cloak. Now, wait until you are playing and then type 'car'. Hey presto, stealth attack mode.

For some highly effective powered-up photon torpedoes type '$punish' during the 'Omega 12-300' mission.

Type 'mercury' in the 'End Game' mission to instantly kill the nasty Romulan near Raven.

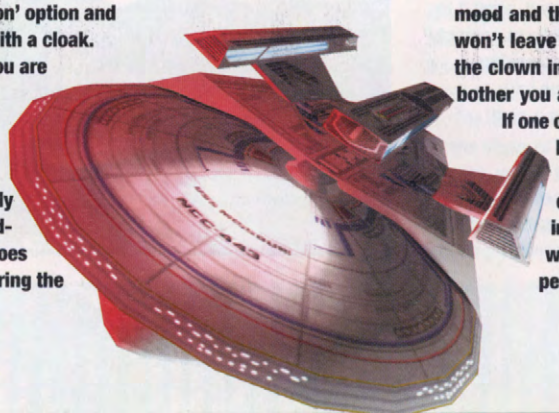
Type '$->me!' in the 'Smugglers Den' mission to kill Sherak.

AGE OF EMPIRES II: THE CONQUERERS

Microsoft

During the game press 'Enter' and then type one of the following codes into the text box:

robin hood	1000 gold
rock on	1000 stone
lumberjack	1000 wood
Aegis	Fast building
i r winner	Instant victory
Marco	Full map
polo	No fog of war
torpedo1	Kill Opponent 1
torpedo2	Kill Opponent 2
torpedo3	Kill Opponent 3
torpedo4	Kill Opponent 4
torpedo5	Kill Opponent 5
torpedo6	Kill Opponent 6
torpedo7	Kill Opponent 7
torpedo8	Kill Opponent 8
woof woof	Flying dogs
resign	Instant loss
black death	Destroy all opponents
natural wonders	Control nature
cheese steak jimmy's	1000 food
how do you turn this on	Cobra car
wimpywimpywimpy	Commit suicide
to smithereens	Saboteur unit
i love the monkey head	Tall, fast moving, useless villager
furious the monkey boy	Little monkey



WARCRAFT II BATTLE.NET EDITION

Blizzard

If you're a bit of an online *Warcraft* fan, you may be interested in these codes that can only be used on the Battle.net version of the game: Simply type them during gameplay:

Unite the clans	Instantwin
Tigerlily	Enables level skip
On screen	Reveal map
Deck me out	All weapon/armour upgrades
Glittering prizes	Increases your resources
Hatchet	Trees can be cut down with two whacks
Make it so	Increases production speed of buildings and units
It is a good day to die	Units are almost invincible
Every little thing she does	All spell upgrades
There can be only one	Campaign victory sequence

THE SIMS: LIVIN' IT UP

Electronic Arts

We've had just enough time to mess around with the latest add-on pack for *The Sims* and this is what we found:

When a Sim is in a bad mood and the tragedy clown won't leave it alone, kill the clown in a fire. It won't bother you again.

If one of your Sims has been abducted by aliens and then dropped back into your house with a totally crap personality, don't

fret. Use the telescope again, and attempt to get abducted once again to see if you can be returned with a better frame of mind. If that doesn't work, keep getting abducted until it does.

If you negotiate with he Grim Reaper whenever somebody dies, you can sometimes resurrect them.

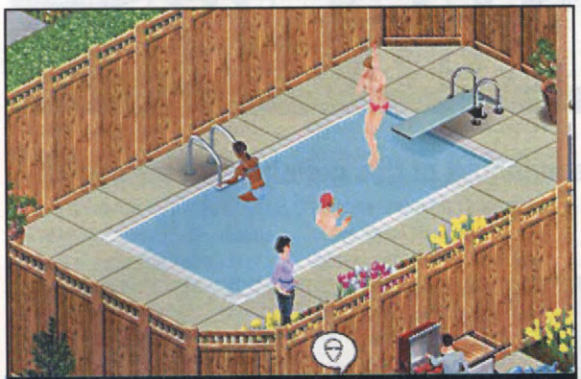
When you buy the genie lamp rub it to make the genie appear. He will give you two wishes, but sometimes they can backfire.

Always save the game before you make a potion with the Chemistry set because, if you turn into a zombie, you can't turn back into a Sim.

If you buy Servo, he will clean up your house and repair all broken objects. Very handy.



In *FIFA 2000*, there's an easy way of consistently scoring from a free kick.



Let Servo do all the work while you spend your life by the pool.

FIFA 2000
EA Sports

We've recently discovered a cool way of scoring virtually every time from a free kick. As you're about to take the free kick, tap the down button twice in quick succession. Then add maximum spin towards the outside of the wall. Now keep the targeting arrow exactly where it is and press shoot. Release the shoot button when you have full power on your shot – that should do it. This method works pretty much all the time, if it doesn't – it's your fault, not ours. PCZ

PHONE FOR HELP

Having trouble with a game and can't wait to see a reply in these pages? Then you need to check out...

THE *PC ZONE* TIPS HELPLINE ON

0906 466 4475

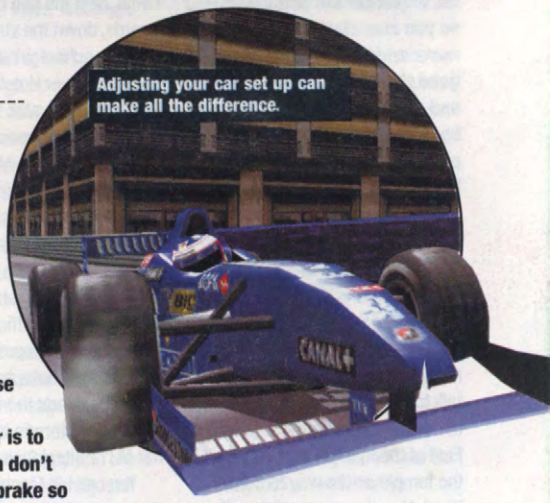
OPEN SEVEN DAYS A WEEK, 8AM-11PM

On the rare occasion that they can't help, your query will be passed on to a support team who guarantee to find you an answer within 24 hours.

• Calls cost £1.50 per minute at all times. Charges will appear on your standard telephone bill. If you do not pay the bill yourself, seek permission from whoever does pay it before calling. If you have any problems, please call Customer Services on 0870 800 6155.

DEAR KEITH

Blistered fingers? Burnt brain? Aching heart? Keith Pullin knows the feeling well



Adjusting your car set up can make all the difference.

BIG, RED AND HARD

Q I've reached the main man himself on *Diablo II* and guess what? The big red toss pot has me stumped! I'm playing as the Necromancer but still can't make any real headway into him – I've unleashed hordes of undead, but it barely makes any difference. Am I so useless? What do I have to do? Please help me.

Graeme Woolem, Preston

A **You're actually on the right track, if you summon a golem instead of your pathetic skeletons that should do the trick. However, once you've created the golem near Diablo, don't wait around to see what happens. Teleport out of the room and let the golem do the work himself. If the golem dies, teleport back in there, create another golem, and then teleport back out. Repeat as many times as necessary. Easy.**

THE WALTONS?

Q I've just started playing *The Sims*, but I think it's a bit confusing. I've got people running all over the place (well five people anyway) and I can't keep up with all the different stuff that they want. They're also fighting each other all the time because they don't know how to share things properly. Basically I'm in a complete mess and would like to know how I can play the game more smoothly.

David Mann, Lewisham

A **If this is your first game and you're controlling a family that size it's no wonder you're confused. At first you should only control one person, that's more than enough to get used to how the game works. As for all your Sims fighting, I'm not surprised. They probably need more fun things in the house – try getting a bookcase or something. Better still, try getting jobs for them, that'll get them out of the house at least.**

SPUDULIKE

Q I'm playing *Icewind Dale* and I've found a sack of potatoes. Apart from reminding me of an ex-girlfriend, I don't know what to do with it. Any ideas?

Keith Honeyford, Bristol

A **All you have to do is give it to some Gnomes. Basically, from where you found the bag, take the lift down to a lower cavern. Talk to a gnome down there and ask if there's anything you can do to help. Give him the bag of spuds and you gain experience. Also, you can now free the gnomes and go to their hidden city that contains lots of interesting shops.**

SLIPPERY WHEN WET

Q I'm getting some serious driving action in on *Grand Prix 3*, but I can't stay on the track during a wet race – it's bleedin' impossible, mate. If you could give me some kind of idea as to how to stay on the track, I'd be grateful.

Darren Payne, Liverpool

A **Firstly, you need to adjust your brake balance so it's more towards the rear of the car. Secondly, you need to short-shift your gears – this means the engine won't reach such high revs and thus your wheels shouldn't spin when accelerating. Apart from those technical details, the most important point to remember is to take it easy. By this we mean don't accelerate so quickly, don't brake so late and, most importantly, never drive over the slippery apex of a bend – if there's one thing guaranteed to throw you off course it's that. Happy driving.**

NOT FUN FAIR

Q I'm playing that seminal classic *Rollercoaster Tycoon*, but I've got a major problem that's hindering my progress. Basically, no matter what I do, my park rating always goes down. Why is this happening? Could you please give me some hints to avoid this?

Andrew Tiler, Blackpool

A **There are loads of reasons why this could be happening. For one, it could be raining – if that's the case, you just have to wait until the rain passes. Secondly, your rides may have crashed, leading people to not want to go on them. I could go on, but essentially it sounds like you need to take more care of your park. Make sure you've got plenty of mechanics wandering about, keep queues short and, finally, get rid of litter quickly. Well, that's about it. Remember, care for your park and it will undoubtedly make you money.**

Q I'm playing *Devil Inside* and have managed to get quite a long way through it. Unfortunately, I'm now quite stuck in the Necropolis area of the game. I've reached Jethro, the torturer, who has Angelina strapped to a wheel, but I can't seem to kill this mad axe-wielding maniac or rescue Angelina. Could you please tell me how I can get past this point? It's really doing my head in.

Tracy Miller, Wimborne

A **Right then, Trace, you need to shoot the four stalactites above Angelina – you can tell where they are because occasionally they light up and emit a kind of weird green light. If you destroy all four of them, Jethro becomes vulnerable and you can kill him. Once he's dead, you can rescue Angelina and then move on.**

DEUS EX

PLAYER'S GUIDE: PART TWO

***Paul Mallinson* lets you in on the secrets of *Deus Ex* success, in the second part of this definitive player's guide**

REVIEWED PCZ #93 **SCORE** 94%

Completing the immense *Deus Ex* is a task not to be taken lightly. For starters the game has three completely different endings, and the longer *Deus Ex* goes on, the better the game gets – so you may start wishing that it never ends! Unfortunately, all good things have to come to an end at some point, and the second instalment of this player's guide will facilitate that. Just try and get over it once you've completed it.

WAN CHI MARKET, HONG KONG

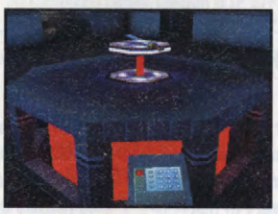
Mission: Find Tracer Tong

Jock instructs you to find the mysterious Tracer Tong. First, go talk to Gordon Quick – the leader of the Luminous Path Triad. He's East of the market, next door to the temple on the way to Canal Road. He asks you to retrieve the 'Dragon's Tooth' sword from Triad rivals Red Arrows, and to prove that a lady called Maggie Chow is causing war between them. Maggie Chow lives on Tonnochi Road. To get there go left at the entrance to the Lucky Money club (you'll see a sign), then cross the canal, past the two Chinese guards, down the stairs, LOADING, past the schoolgirl and to The Queen's Tower Hotel. Take the Penthouse elevator. Here you'll be greeted by a maid who will accompany you to Maggie Chow. After the conversation has ended go upstairs and search the rooms. If the maid threatens to call the police, stun her with the cattle prod. Find the entrance to Maggie's secret office and work out her computer login ID (read the books and the datacubes), and then access the security terminal to confirm her MJ12 allegiance.

You can kill Maggie Chow now if you want to, then go back down the elevator and bypass the door to the maintenance elevator. Go up and pick the door by the elevator. Kill the first MJ12 guard quietly, then dodge tripwires (use LMP grenades if you've got any). Enter security area and kill four guards (watch out for the guard with the Plasma Gun). Access computer terminal as Maggie Chow and open the case to the sword.



The market is a good place to start.



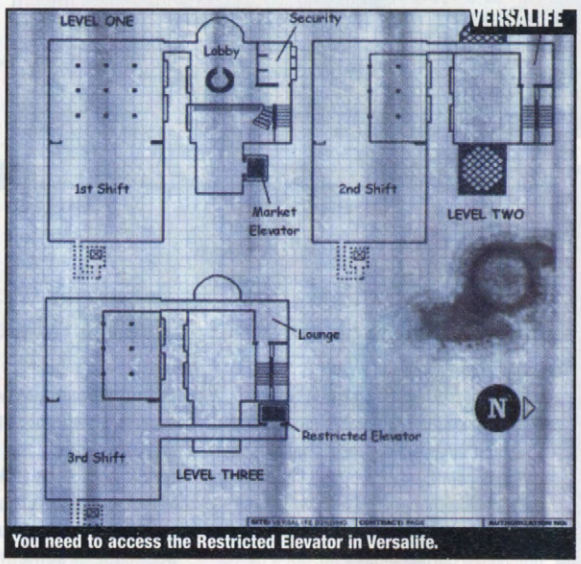
The Dragon's Tooth makes the Daikatana look blunt by comparison.

Now head back to the market place, and to the Lucky Money club (down stairs to Wan Chi Underground Market). Pay the girls to get in and go to the upstairs bar. Go through corridor and down stairs, through meeting room and over small bridge to Max Chen.

MJ12 troops then raid the club. Fight them off and return to Gordon Quick of the Luminous Path. He'll give you the code to get into their base. Enter and go up stairs and into the door opposite entrance. Go down stairs, left through the wooden door and down to the big hall. Use same code as entrance on keypad by leftmost table.



The code to Tracer Tong's Lab entrance is 1997.



You need to access the Restricted Elevator in Versalife.

Then go meet Tracer Tong and he'll cure your killswitch. In return he requires you to infiltrate Versalife and retrieve the Dragon's Tooth ROM encoding. Before leaving get the key to Jock's apartment and ransack it (found up lift, opposite Queen's Tower Hotel).

VERSALIFE

Mission: Retrieve Dragon's Tooth ROM encoding

The entrance to the Versalife building is by the entrance to Wan Chi Underground Market. Enter using code 06288, then proceed to third floor. Talk to Mr Hundley (black suit), then continue on and talk to Nervous Employee. You then have three choices: a) kill Hundley; b) bribe him (steep at 2000 credits); or c) forge a fake ID (login any computer as: all_shifts/data_entry). If you kill Hundley, make sure you do it out of view of cameras/people. Once you have the code, proceed to the door (opposite Nervous Worker) and into the MJ12 Research Facility .

You need to access a computer to download the ROM encoding. To do this you've got two choices: either hack it, or acquire its ID and password. The former is the easiest of the two. A 'master' password can be found on a datacube locked in a cabinet in the conference room (turn right by hand/globe statue, then right again). If you attempt to unlock the cabinet, however, you will be attacked by MJ12 troops (watch out for the guy with the flame-thrower!). It's probably best to kill them all before attempting anything dodgy, but it's worth picking the cabinet because it also contains Aug upgrades. If you prefer a quieter approach, leave the cabinet well alone.

Head into the toilets next to the conference room and locate the entrance to the ducting system. Crawl along until you reach a ladder (killing the stray Greasel in the process). Climb down until you see a ledge opposite (you'll see blue and red walls), then

crouch/drop onto ledge and through the tunnel. Keep going until you come to a closed grate leading down onto a grey disc. Drop down and snipe the patrolling guard (if the alarm goes off, duck and wait until it stops). Drop down and access/hack the computer. Be careful here – once you go down the lift the alarm goes off and you are suddenly attacked from all sides. Don't panic. Out of the lift turn immediately left or right and go up the ramps until you reach the top. Locate the brightly-lit twin corridor and hit the switch – this will open a ramp to the entrance chamber. Kill the MJ12 Commando (watch out for the GEP gun guard) and make a quick exit to the lift. Once you're back in Versalife the alarms go off. Run down the stairs, kill or avoid five more guards and get out as fast as you can.



These guys are working for the wrong team, so kill them.

Go to the temple next to Wan Chi Market and talk with the triads.

VERSALIFE LEVEL 2

Mission: Access Level 2 And Locate Info About Grey Death

Thankfully, there's a back entrance to level 2, and it's down the Canal Road Tunnel (East of temple). Behind crashed cop van, open door with code 66566. Pick grate and drop down pipe. You'll drop into water. Make your way up pipes and out to corridor. Locate grate leading up to corridor with corner mirror. Kill MJ12 Commando and destroy bot, then hack security terminal and disable cameras, but keep door closed. Go down ramp and snipe MJ12 Commando and scientist quickly and quietly.



A commando and scientist. Easy pickings for a good sniper.

If the alarm goes off two Bots attack. Either destroy them or dash to the room to the right of the computer and deactivate them via the red button. Before accessing the computer, hack or break into the security panel in the same room (mj12/security). It says 'Open Nanotech Containment Pods' and 'Raise Cascade Shutdown Console', But don't hit them just yet. First click 'Security' and disable all cameras. Then click them. Next hack/access computer and download virus info. Climb down into the Universal Constructor chamber and pilfer the Aug upgrade canisters. Then climb down to the next level. Install your Augs on handy Medical bot. If Maggie Chow is alive you get to fight her here. Then, use the code 525 on the console. Boom! Kill the two spider bots (use Sabot shells or explosives – bullets are useless), then drop down into the pit. Drop through hole (not into green gunk!) and climb above the poison gas. Then jump over to the water pipe and dive in. Keep swimming until you reach an air pocket, then ready a sword or similar to kill the swimming Karkian up ahead (guns don't work underwater). Keep swimming until you reach the canal, then go back to Tong and install your new Augs (our tip: Environmental Resistance is handy, but you've got a lot of swimming ahead, so go for the Aqualung).

NEW YORK: HELL'S KITCHEN

Mission: Make Contact With The Illuminati

Go meet Harley Filbin in the Underground Bar, and speak to the sailor at the bar, then go meet Stanton Dowd at Osgood & Son. After speaking to him you'll be attacked by approximately 10 MJ12 troops, so be prepared (note: 20mm HE ammo is useful if you've got any). Go see smuggler and ask about explosives. They cost 2500, which you'll need if you want to buy them. Smuggler also has some Camothermic Armour upstairs hidden behind the mirror.



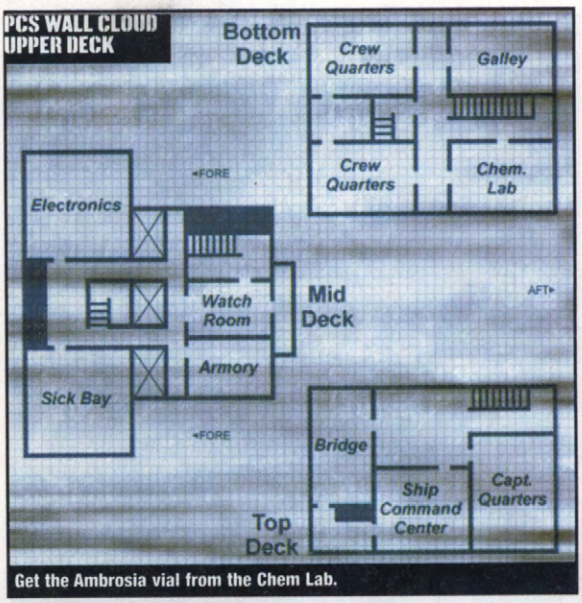
Buy explosives from Smuggler.

When you're done, head to the top of the hotel and get in the helicopter.

BROOKLYN NAVAL BASE

Mission: Enter PCS Wall Cloud

Enter through grate and kill three guards (they all have keys to main gate). Enter the base either through gate, tunnels or over barracks roof. Gate is probably wisest. Snipe guards and enter door by two containers. Look for security terminal by two soda machines. Hack and disable cameras. Carefully take out rest of the guards. If you scare an engineer, kill him because he'll set off the alarms. You need to get to the tall structure (a crane) to the North West, but it's guarded by two large bots. Either destroy them using LAMs or by luring them near explosive barrels. Kill other guards, turn the valve,



Get the Ambrosia vial from the Chem Lab.



Look for this valve. When you find it, turn it.

sneak into the lift at the base of the crane, then go up and press button to lower arm. Cross carefully and smash the vent on the roof. Next you'll come to a fan patrolled by three spider bots. Chuck a Scramble grenade if you have one, then they'll kill each other. Otherwise sabot shells should despatch them. There are two more spider bots behind the door, so leave them. Crawl through the grille and into the next area and open grille to ship. You can't cross yet, so take ladder down to Crane Control lift. Go up and press button. Go back up to grille and cross on girder, quietly.

PCS WALL CLOUD UPPER DECK

Mission: Access Lower Deck

Carefully despatch sailors and guards and secure area. There's an Aug upgrade canister (locked in a safe) and a vial of Ambrosia in the Chem Lab.

Key to lower deck is in Captain's Quarters, but they're locked. Enter Sick Bay and crawl through vent into Electronics Lab. Get Ops code from datacube (83353), then go upstairs to Command Center (avoiding more guards). Get code from datacube, then enter Captain's room and get key (bedside cabinet) and armoury code (under bed). Raid armoury before heading below deck.

PCS WALL CLOUD LOWER DECK

Mission: Blow 5 x Tri-Welds

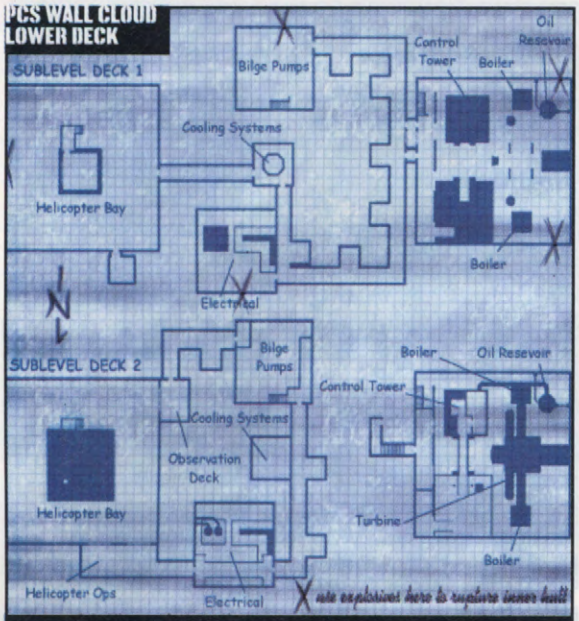
Go downstairs and turn left. Drop down and enter boiler room. Destroy first boiler tri-weld with LAM. The second is hidden by a reservoir wall, but can be blown by simply chucking a LAM over it. Go back to door watched by cameras, kill two guards and sneak through. Turn left towards Electrical, kill guards then talk to engineer. Avoiding arcing electricity, take out spider bot and bypass panel. Open nearby floor hatch and go down. If you can't

let the games begin

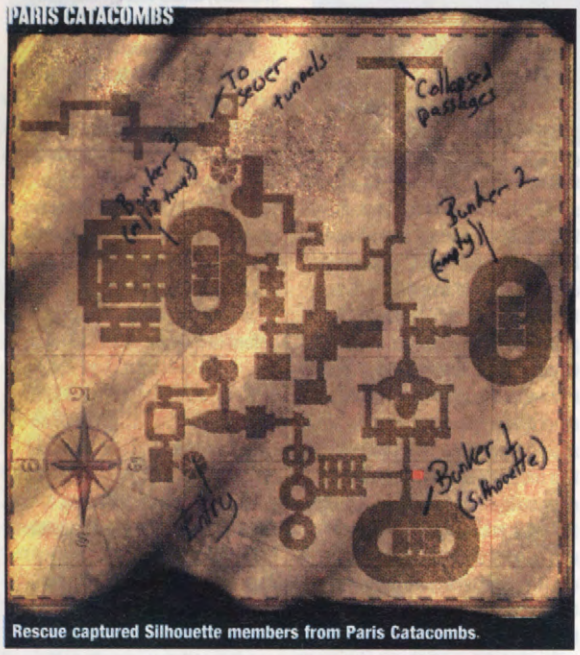
FREE INTERNET ACCESS

Playing on the gameplay site costs nothing. It's fun and it's easy to get started. We'll give you all the help you need to get to the widest range of games and clubs on the web.
Get into gameplay, now. And play.
www.gameplay.com/wireplay

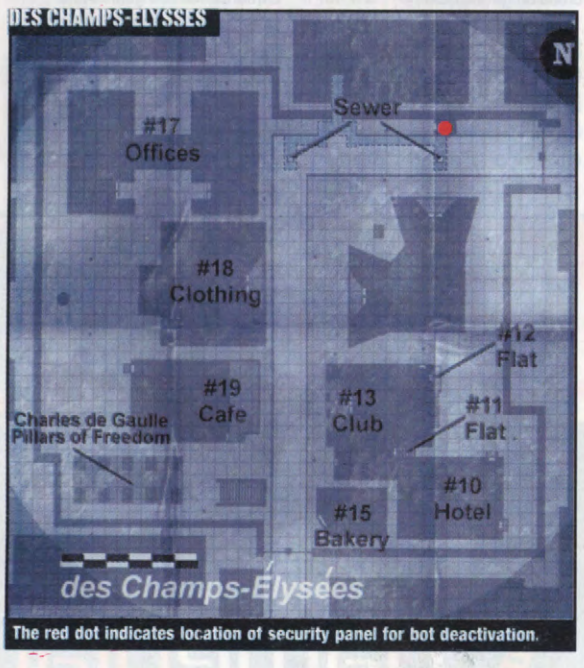
gameplay
THE GATEWAY TO GAMES



'X' marks the spot – chuck explosives where marked.



Rescue captured Silhouette members from Paris Catacombs.



The red dot indicates location of security panel for bot deactivation.

bypass blue trip be prepared to fight another spider bot that comes out of cubby hole nearby. Bypass final panel to kill electricity. Then head up and blow (third) tri-weld seam.

Next, go to door of Bilge room. Kill patrolling guards and hack nearby security panel. Disable cameras and open locked door. Enter, kill remaining guards and destroy (fourth) tri-weld. Go to computer in corner of room. Hit Bilge Power button,



Turn bilge power on, then reverse flow.

then access computer using KZhao/Captain. Reverse flow. Go upstairs and through door. Kill guard and hack security panel by fan. Continue to next room and hack panel to your immediate right. Cross cage and hack next security panel. Change turret control to 'Attacking Enemies' (they'll kill guards for you). Kill next two guards and go down hatch in floor. Locate final tri-weld seam and destroy it. Exit to upper decks, then out, then over the side and into the water. Climb out and enter door to West of dock. Climb up ladder. If you came in this way the coast will be clear, if not: prepare to fight a bunch of spider bots. Meet Jock on roof.

LOWER EAST SIDE CEMETERY

Mission: Meet Stanton Dowd

Press button. Gate Keeper lets you in. This man is actually a double-agent, and has a helicopter-incapacitating EMP device hidden behind a bookshelf in the gate house. If you kill him now, and chuck a LAM into the gatehouse you'll save yourself a battle later.


All spies must die!

Enter crypt, talk to Dowd and give him Ambrosia vial (if you picked it up earlier). If you haven't killed the Gate Keeper yet, you'll have to fight four MJ12 troops and destroy the device in the gate house. More troops will arrive once this is done, so run to the chopper as fast as you can!

DENFERT-ROCHEREAU, PARIS

Mission: Locate Catacombs

Go down lift (code 4003), then up steps and talk to Odd Woman. Go down to bottom of spiral staircase and open door to radiation (0001). Use Environmental Resistance Aug or Hazmat Suit and run through quickly. Kill four Greasels in sewers. Head back to Odd Woman for tip about rockets, or continue on. Open grate and carefully sneak topside and behind crates. Quietly snipe 3 x MJ12 Commandos and hide bodies. If you're spotted and can't fight, run into the subway – they won't follow you in.

Inside subway speak to Arms Dealer, then enter mall area. Destroy bot and take out three soldiers. Return to Arms Dealer for discount. There are rockets hidden in a storeroom underneath the building immediately right of the subway exit. To get them pick front door, go up stairs (right from entrance), hack the security panel, disable turret and open door. Then go down and have them over.

Next, go behind the building to the East and smash boards over window. Enter and descend to the catacombs.

PARIS CATACOMBS

Mission: Make Contact With Silhouette

Be careful down here, there are mines attached to some walls and MJ12 troops/commandos patrolling the area. Look for a brick with a lockpick on it.


Hard to miss: entrance brick.

Press brick to enter Silhouette bunker. Find and talk to the leader, Chad.

He asks you to rescue hostages, and gives you key to next area.

Unlock blast door and continue on. Eliminate commando and continue until you reach ramp leading down. Kill two guards and continue until you reach red tripwires. The hostages have to come through this way if you free them, so try and disable everything quietly first. Then back up and locate hidden passage behind crucifix. Crawl along until you see MJ12 troops. Kill four commandos, three troops and one WIB. Search bodies for Catacombs Sewer Entry key, then free hostages. Hopefully you cleared the way earlier and they will return to the Silhouette bunker safely. Talk to Chad then go to the sewer door, which is North, then West of Silhouette. Keep going until you reach some ladders.

DES CHAMPS-ELYSEES

Mission: Find Nicolette DuClare

The Paris streets are crawling with MJ12 troops, and coppers, so be extra careful. The cops won't attack unless either you attack them, or they see you with a gun drawn. Exit the drain and hide yourself. Make your way to the Café and talk to Jamie Reyes to get Gunther's 'killswitch', then the man at the table next to you (he'll give you security ID to disable bots, if you want to go that far). Go to front of La Porte L'Enfer. To enter, either buy a key from Louis, or pick through the grille and steal it. Inside find the young woman sat on her own and ask about Nicolette DuClare.

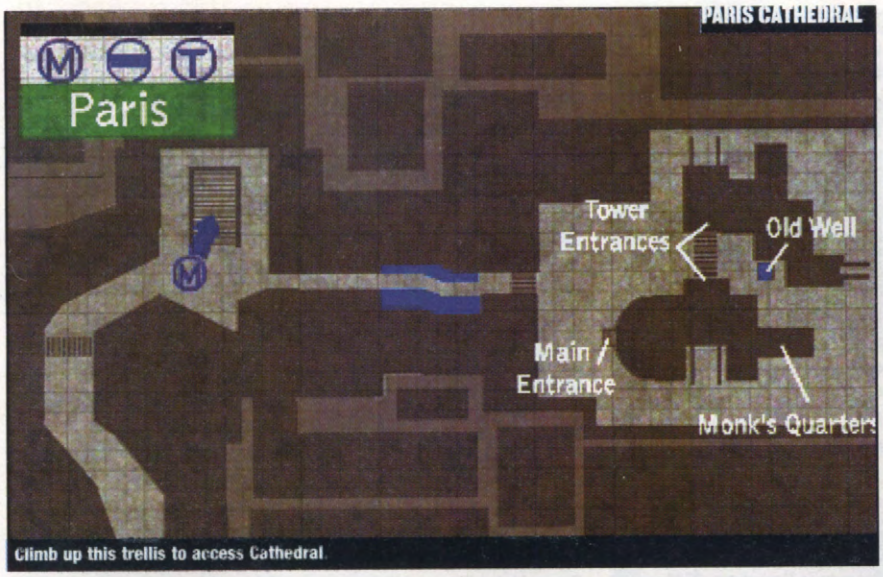

Does this lady know Nicolette DuClare?

She'll tell you to meet her at the back of the club. Unless you want to clear the entire area of MJ12 (possible, but not easy), or take on any of the other secondary tasks, take the copter to the Chateau now.

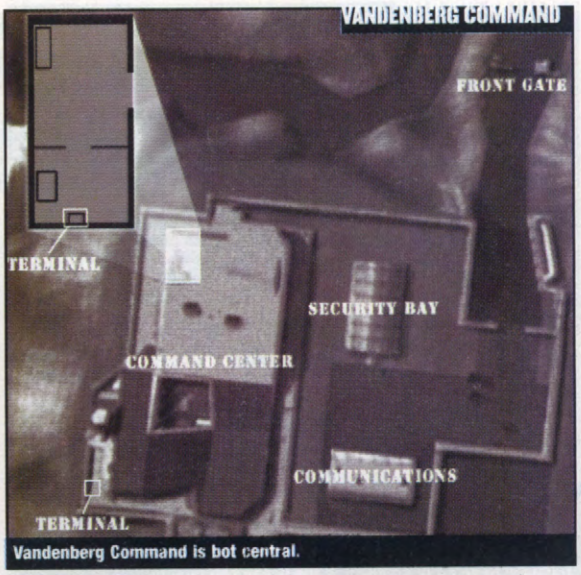
CHATEAU DUCLARE

Mission: Find Beth DuClare's Computer

Smash the boards over the back door and enter. Find the kitchen. Get inside dumb waiter (food lift) and go up to Beth's room. Get basement key from behind painting. Go down into basement and find secret passage via candelabra. Break fallen girders and find security terminal in small room by two crates – hack and open door. Continue until you reach computer. Login (bduclare/nico_angel) and transmit message to Morgan Everett. Take the last Aug upgrade canister and head back, and out, to the maze entrance.



Climb up this trellis to access Cathedral.



Vandenberg Command is bot central.


This should be the final Augmentation upgrade canister.


Give them a dose of their own medicine.

Kill two MJ12 commandos and enter crypt.

PARIS CATHEDRAL

Mission: Access MJ12 Computer Network

Exit sewers and climb onto large box. Smash window and crawl through. Upstairs you'll find the Gate Keeper's key – go back out and use it on the gate. Kill MJ12 commando. Continue until you reach overhead bridge. There's a huge bot patrolling nearby, plus a camera opposite a green door. If you snipe a soldier on the bridge (there are three), then hide, you should get them to open the green door for you. You'll then be able to go in and finish the others off.

Evade or destroy the bot, and the patrolling commando and soldier, and pass the Metro station entrance (to your left). Kill next commando. Up ahead is the Cathedral, but it is heavily defended by troops and bots, so be careful at all times. Learn MJ12 patrol routes and sneak around to the right until you reach a trellis by some crates. Climb it, then climb pillar. Smash skylight and drop into library. Find Main Gate key. Exit left, kill sniper and go up. Kill another sniper, cross bridge and kill two more snipers. Go down and through the first exit from the stairwell, down two more flights, past blast door, up, left (there's another blast door with a camera and a guard to the right here, but leave for now), up again – until you come to two wooden doors. The right door is unlocked. Take it, then kill Woman In Black. View datacube, hack security panel (disable lone camera) and rob everything. Go back down three flights of stairs to the gold vault. Enter 1942 and disable first panel. The next bit is easier than it looks. Simply run through the room and duck, out of view, in the middle – until the cameras settle down. Crawl to back of vault and hack panel.

Leave vault and go back to other blast door. Disable/avoid camera and open door with 0022. Go down and confront Gunther Hermann. You'll have to fight him if you didn't talk to Jamie Reyes in Champs Elysees. Access computer and establish system uplink.

Go back the way you came – to the library (over bridge), all the way down to the main church doors (killing the commando in process). You should have the key, so unlock them. Cross the yard without being spotted by bots, then continue all the way to the Metro station. Enter, then track down Everett's agent and agree to be blindfolded.

MORGAN EVERETT'S HOUSE

Mission: Meet Morgan Everett

Make your way through the house until you find Everett. Listen to what he says, then find Alex, if you already haven't done so. Install your last Aug if you haven't already done so (our tip: Aggressive Defence System). Go back up to bedroom near where you started. Slide mirror in ensuite bathroom, pick, then get code from datacube by Lucius DeBeers. Head to the blast door adjacent to Alex Jacobson – use code and talk to Morpheus. Exit to the helipad. Before setting off, talk to the mechanic. Yes – he's a plant. Kill him, before setting off.


Spice things up later in the game – don't kill the Odd Mechanic...

VANDENBERG COMMAND

Mission: Destroy Bots And Restore Power

Go down stairs and disable/avoid camera. Kill two guards and find lift. Kill three guards on second floor, and four guards and MIB on first floor. Hack security panel and go through next room and through doors until red tripwire. Disable it, kill two guards (one has flame-thrower) and talk to Researcher to get Command security code.

Next, go through sliding door and kill two commandos. Then, destroy four bots by any means possible. Duck and cover wherever possible. Use 20mm HE ammo, GEP gun, or LAW rockets. Then speak to scientist in Comm building. Find hatch leading to tunnels (back of Comm building). Go down, deactivate security and into Hazard area. Stop! Don't press door button, or take unlocked grate, take maintenance gate – it's much safer. Cross pipes and shoot spiders. Go down stairs, disable blue trip and find lift controls. Press button three. Go back upstairs, cross lift and get Control Center key. Climb ladder, exit onto level one. Take lift

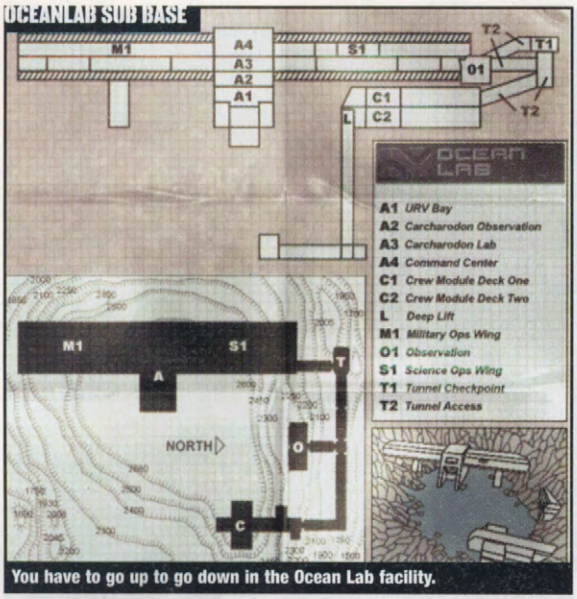
meet new enemies

Find them at gameplay. You'll get all the ladders, leagues, tournaments and competitions you could want. Plus the fastest connections to your favourite games - and to the deadliest human opponents. Get into gameplay, now. And prepare to do battle.

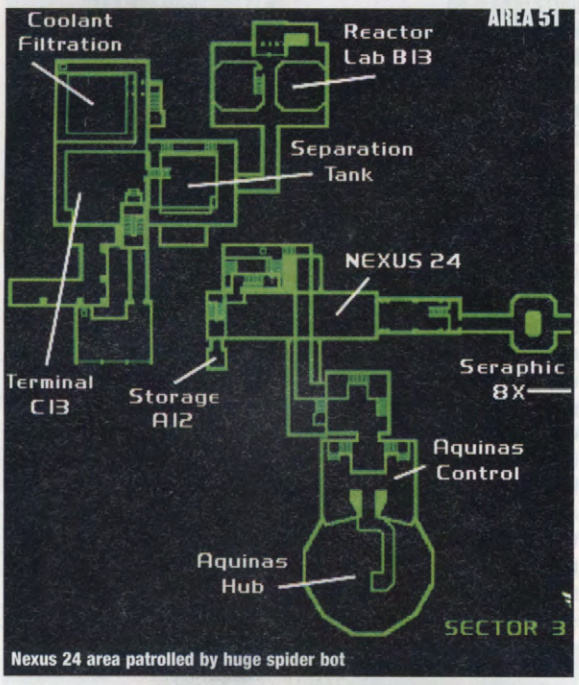
www.gameplay.com/wireplay

FREE INTERNET ACCESS

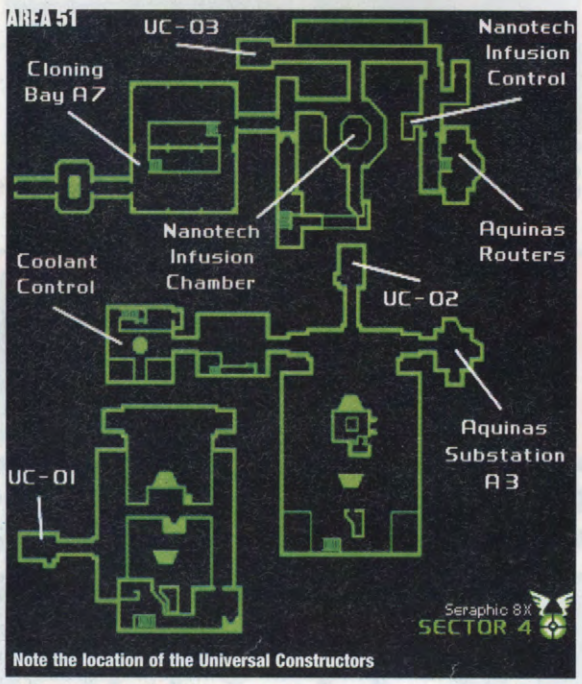
gameplay
THE GATEWAY TO GAMES



You have to go up to go down in the Ocean Lab facility.



Nexus 24 area patrolled by huge spider bot



Note the location of the Universal Constructors

to level two and unlock Control Center. Down stairs to right you'll find Gary Savage. Bypass two panels to stop arcing electricity, then activate computer uplink.


Try not to get your legs burnt off bypassing these panels.

Meet Tong and Jock outside the base and down the hill.

ABANDONED GAS STATION

Mission: Rescue Gary Savage's Daughter Tiffany

Talk to Bum and get Sewer key. Crawl through drain and up to station. Be extremely quiet. If you are spotted the hostage is killed. Kill first guard and hide body. Sneak into station and locate hatch in air vents. Quietly gain access and make way onto roof. Silently jump across onto next building. Ready yourself to take on MJ12 troops and MIB. They will immediately attempt to kill the hostage, so quick, decisive action is necessary. Kill four remaining enemies then return to copter.

NEW WEST COAST SUB BASE

Mission: Steal A Mini Sub

Avoid bots/troops and make your way to small hut. Pick lock, then get two keys inside. Either unlock door and enter base, or jump into water without being seen by snipers. Swim towards light from structure. Kill two divers. Climb ladder and kill guard. Inside base find scientist with map and computer logon info.


This bloke has some useful information for you.

Then secure area. Go back to pool room where you first entered and open door and kill soldier. Cross platform, enter and kill one guard. Take lift down to URV bay. Hide behind crate and access security panel. Turn off cams and make turrets kill your enemies. Talk to woman scientist and kill two more MJ12. Access security panel (tech/sharkman) and open URV bay door. Upstairs; kill troop and find sub.

OCEANLAB SUB BASE

Mission: Locate UC schematic

Locate security panel in first room and disable cameras. Go up to top flight of stairs. Open door and hack security panel without getting shot by turret.


Try to hack security without being shot to ribbons.

Enter and go left. Block rogue turret with metal crate. Enter Greasel lab, kill two of them, then go down ladder into water. Continue through, killing Greasels and locate datacube with door access code. Use it to enter drilling area. Kill two Greasels and one (big) Karkian (use electrified track).Get Crew Module key from side office, then go through until you find a lift. Go down (past LOADING) and bypass blue trips. There's a huge spider bot patrolling here.


Don't kiss the thing! Shoot it from a distance.

Either avoid the spider (it's pretty dumb) or destroy it from a distance. Take lift up. Avoiding rogue turrets, hack panel to raise bridge. Cross bridge and use compute141r. Exit the way you came. Fight Walton Simons in drill room, then two Karkian (use electric track). Keep going, through water (kill diver), keep going – all the way to roof of Command Center.

NEW WEST COAST - MISSILE SILO

Mission: Stop Nuclear Missile

Kill sniper on tower. Kill (four) dogs. Enter hut, kill two guards and get Front Gate key. Enter compound and, avoiding guards/bots, smash window and enter hut with maintenance bot. Climb down grate and go down metal stairs into silo. 8456 on two doors. Same into Launch Command. Bypass red trips. Fight MJ12 commando and four MIBs, then abort launch. Access computer, reprogram missile, then disable security. Head into silo and fight two commandos and two MIBs. Take lift to five. Kill saboteur. Take lift to one, kill MIB and exit.

AREA 51

Mission: Unknown

Kill sniper on tower. Avoid/destroy two bots and sneak up to hangar. Take out two commandos and one MIB, then find soldier hiding inside room with fallen girder. Get security code from him, then go over to Command 24 building. Enter and get Tower key. Go up tower, carefully deactivating LAM traps, and access security panel to open blast door.

Inside bunker hack first panel and destroy two more bots. Turn right and find unlocked door, and ladder to upper level. Shoot spider bot, go down into locked room and restore elevator power. Go back to, and down, elevator.

Bypass first camera and avoid unleashing spider bots with blue trips, then avoid exploding generator further on. Talk to Morgan Everett at holo booth, then continue straight on. Kill two commandos and three snipers. Find Recreation door and use 8946. Kill troops and WIB, then disable security. Find Barracks door and use 8946 again. Use 0169 on cabinet to get key to Level 3. Access Level 3 and locate lift. Soldiers and MIBs come up on lift, so ready yourself before hitting button. Go down (past LOADING) and talk to Tong.

There's a guard with a GEP gun walking the gantry in Terminal C13, plus a sniper, two Karkian and a Greasel. Kill all, then swim into filtration rods. Kill two Greasels and find datacube with Reactor Lab code, and Stairwell key. Go to bottom, kill two spiders and access Reactor Lab. Kill two greys and go down into mist. Locate datacube near dead engineer. Go back and access stairwell. Kill guards and MIBs, then enter Aquinas Hub (1038). Down ladder, kill two greys, LEFT, kill commando and take lift up to Helios. You'll be attacked by MIBs and commandos on your way out, but bots will arrive to help you. Go back to the ladder you came down on. Take the stairs down. Use 4225 to access the Explosives Locker and chuck TNT crates onto spider bot below. Watch for Greasel at bottom, then head into Sector 4. After talking to Gary Savage and Bob Page you must decide


"Come back here you loser".

how to end the game. Note: each floor in Sector 4 has a Universal Constructor that continually recreates monsters that you kill. The only way to stop them is to bypass the door panels nearby, turn the emergency switches (difficult if a Karkian is attacking), then kill all the monsters. Don't forget to activate security bots to help with the killing.

MERGE WITH HELIOS AI

Mission: Deactivate Uplink Locks

Turn right at Bob Page and climb up small ladder. Open hatch and take long ladder down. You'll find a datacube with Aquinas Substation code. Access Substation door and avoid blast from explosion. Bypass panel to stop arcing electricity. Hack security panel (open door) and take lift up. Activate two buttons and access computer. Go back to top of Aquinas Hub in Sector 3.


Engage both these machines before accessing computer.

NEW DARK AGE

Mission: Reverse Coolant And Destruct Reactors

Get Coolant Control code from cubby hole on first floor (near radiation barrel – on shelf). Head NW end Sector 4. Enter and kill commando and (four) soldiers. Press 'Flush System' button, then head back to Sector 3. Enter Radiation Lab and locate two buttons on fusion reactors (inside green mist). Then, push three buttons in control room. Kill mechanic if he tries to stop you.



Wash away those turd-like enemies...

JOIN ILLUMINATI

Mission: Bring Down Four Blue Fusion Reactors

There's one reactor on the top floor, one on the ground floor, and two on the first floor (one in a high radiation area). Use the code 7243 to deactivate them. When last one is done bots will attack, so be extremely careful at this point. Then head to the top floor and hit Infusion Control button.

CRASH COURSE SURVIVAL SKILLS AND CHEATS FOR BEGINNERS: PART TWO

As if that little lot wasn't enough for you, here are some handy hints and a bunch of cheats just in case you're still struggling

GUN SENSORS

The Hong Kong police force use gunfire sensors. If you shoot a gun all hell will break loose. So, unless you want action, keep your weapons holstered in the streets.

FRIENDLY NPCS

In the second half of *Deus Ex* there are tons of Non-Player Characters with information that can make your life as an assassin much, much easier. Avoid killing NPCs in combat, and talk to them whenever possible.

SECURE AREA!

If you're skilful enough it can often be better to 'secure' the area you are currently operating in – killing enemies swiftly and quietly, and closing down security in the process. Once done you have a free reign to do whatever the hell you like.

OTHERS OPEN DOORS

If there's an enemy on the other side of a locked door, you can often get them to open it by making a noise. A simple jump or shot will alert them to your presence – hide, wait for them to open door, and – bang – they're dead, and you're in...

USEFUL TIPS

Remember our tips from last month? Like sniping around an alarm button? Or hacking ATMs being less effective than using found account codes? Or that readying yourself before a hack is a good idea? You don't?! Like, doh! Looks like you're going to have to buy issue 95, doesn't it?

COMPUTER/ SECURITY PASSWORDS

There are ways to deduce most computer/security login IDs and passwords. Most login names conform to the 'first initial' + 'surname' convention, and are case-sensitive (ie Maggie Chow's login name is 'MChow'). Clues to passwords are hidden in books and notes in datacubes. Read everything, and take note of both the name of the person leaving the message and the recipient. That way you should be able to crack most computers without hacking and have all the time in the world to peruse their contents. If you can't be arsed, here's a list to help you out:

Login	Password
Queenstower	Security
MChow	Insurgent
all_shifts	data_entry
mchow	Damocles
KZhao	Captain
bduclare	nico_angel
MEverett	pynchon
command	zebra42
Tunnel01	Omega2a
GSavage	Tiffany
APinkerton	Antennapedia
tech	sharkman
oceanguard	kraken
mj12	skywalker
a51	xx15yz
area51	bravo13
page	uberalles
Icarus	panopticon

ALTERNATIVE ROUTES

There are often numerous ways to approach a problem. This guide doesn't give you all the solutions, so take time to search every nook and cranny for alternatives.

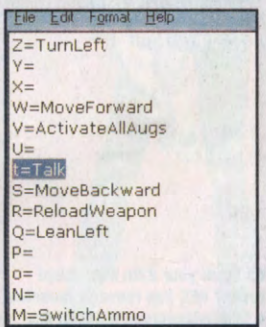
CHEATS

Edit 'User.ini' in Notepad. Scroll down to 'Talk=' and enter a key (we used 't'). Launch game, press 't', delete 'Say' and type:

set DeuxExJCDentonMale bCheatsEnabled True

Then type the following:

god, allweapons, allammo, allskillpoints, allcredits, allimages, allaugs, allhealth, allenergy, opensesame (while targeting locked door), iamwarren, legend, summon XX (where 'XX' is an item from the game)



If you're stuck, cheat.

you'll be back

Gameplay is the site you'll want to come back to. It's easy to connect to the UK's best online games community. And the human opponents are the hardest around. Get into gameplay, again and again. www.gameplay.com/wireplay

FREE INTERNET ACCESS

There is no charge for playing games on the gameplay site, however you will be responsible for call charges (from 1p per minute)

gameplay
THE GATEWAY TO GAMES

DEAR WANDY

Ever felt like your PC was built to serve as a warning to others? Fear not, drop us a line and we'll help knock the bugger back into shape

"I have a budget of around £250-£300, would I be better off getting a new processor or a new graphics card?"
JAMES CRAWLEY ON WHETHER TO GO FOR GRAPHICS OR GRUNT

DOCTOR Philip Wand

COME IN, SIT DOWN

Send us a query or a top tip and you could pocket £50. Share your techie or gaming-related problems with us, and we, in turn, may share them with thousands of readers via these very pages in a big communal love-in type of thing. And, as an extra incentive, if we think it's an amazing tip or interesting query, we'll offer you a cool £50. No, really. Send in as much relevant information as you can.

WRITE TO Dear Wandy, *PC ZONE*, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1P 5FF

EMAIL Address your letters to us at letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk with the subject heading **Dear Wandy**.

Please note: while we can assure you that we read *every* techie query sent to us, we are unable to offer personal replies. Also, please do not phone, as you're unlikely to reach someone who can help. Thanks.

Think your 22in Mitsubishi rocks? NEC has recently launched a 50in widescreen plasma: it's yours for £14,000, inc VAT.



MYSTERY MOTHERBOARD

Q Can you please help me. I'm trying to upgrade my PC from a 400MHz PII to a PIII. The problem I'm having is trying to identify the motherboard and establish whether it will accept a Pentium III. I have the board manual but, unfortunately, there's no obvious indication as to who made it! I've looked on the motherboard itself and I can't see any sign of a name. I know from the manual that I have a P2XBL – but that's it. Thank you for any help you can give me.

Paul Heyes

A **The board you have is made by DFI. According to the information on the company's website, the PIII Katmai is supported to 600MHz, and the PIII Coppermine is supported to 700MHz (but only on revision D boards – look on your motherboard and you should find the revision number printed on it somewhere). Remember, there's a good chance you'll have to update your BIOS: please, please make sure you download and flash in the update before you change the processor. The website you need is** www.dfi.com

SQUARE EYES

Q I am just about to buy a new PC with an AMD Athlon 800MHz and GeForce 2 card. The maximum resolution the monitor is capable of is 1280 x 1024. Is it worth spending £200 more to get a monitor with a higher resolution? I am at the limits of what I can afford already, is 1280 x 1024 high enough to give me good in-game graphics?

Peter Staples

A **You don't say what size the new monitor is, but we hope it's at least 19in for that resolution. Although the 17in monitor on the secondary WandyBoy™ will manage 1280 x 1024 with consummate ease, it gets left at a far more readable 1024 x 768. The most important things are clarity and refresh rate: you need to be able to read it (1280 x 1024 on a 17in monitor will be murder on your eyes) and you need as many hertz as possible. It's very much down to how susceptible you are, but you really want to be above 75Hz in your chosen resolution.**

WAILING BANSHEE

Q Please can you help me. My computer has stopped playing games that require my 3D card (eg *Freespace 2*, *Descent 3*, *Nascar 3*, and *Homeworld*). It all started when I formatted my hard drive – in retrospect, this was not such a good idea. I have an AMD K6 450 with a Gigabyte Super 7 Series motherboard, 128Mb RAM and a PCI Banshee card. I successfully reinstalled Windows 98 with updated 3D drivers from Creative, and everything seemed to work fine: games load and even play the groovy cut scenes. But when you start to actually play them, they crash – between 30 seconds and two minutes into each game. Typically, I've managed to misplace the original CD that came with my Banshee card, so I can't load 3deep onto my machine – could this be the problem? Unfortunately I can't find a copy of it on the Internet – if indeed there is one – and Creative Labs' European website is next to useless. The thing that confuses me is that the screen looks fine, MPG movies work fine, the glossy intro scenes work fine, and for at least a few minutes so do the games. So I can't see what might be wrong. On another separate issue, my modem makes all the phones in my house ring when I connect. Has my machine become possessed? Or has the whole world gone mad? Please help.



3dfx Banshee: old technology with old problems.

Simon Wilmot

A **We've run into this many times with Banshee cards. Make sure you've got rid of all your old drivers, and then download the reference driver set from** www.3dfx.com **(along with the miniGL drivers for any games that require it). 3deep is just a setup utility and shouldn't cause a problem wether you use it or not. As an aside, we've always had more than our fair share of grief with Banshees: it might just be time to raid the piggy bank and go for a GeForce instead.**

With regard to your ringing phones, this is most likely to be the fault of incorrect phone wiring. The first or master socket should have wires connected under the screw connectors. From this socket there should be three wires going round to all your phones connected to pins 2, 3 and 5. You can go without pin 3, but the other phones won't ring when calls come in.

OLD GAME TOO QUICK

Q About a year ago I purchased the *Police Quest Collection*, which contained *Police Quest* episodes 1 to 4. While playing *Police Quest 3* there comes a point where you have to drive the squad car. But even driving in first gear the car travels about 10 blocks in two seconds flat, and I'm constantly disappearing off the edge of map. Is it just a stupid game or is my Cyrix 233MX processor too fast? Any ideas how to slow it down?

Ian Stenning

A **It sounds like you might be stuck. The only way to reliably slow the machine down is to take the lid off and drop the clock speed down. There are also utilities everywhere on the Net. Some work better than others, and which of them will cure your specific problem without affecting the rest of the game is very much a case of trial and error. Many older titles used to make the processor chase round in loops as a substitute for delay, and unfortunately, although many of these could adjust themselves to processor speed, there comes a point where they can only adjust so far. That's when you start getting turbo nutter gameplay. Oh, and *Police Quest* is pretty dire.**

AGP OR PCI

Q I read the letter in last month's Dear Wandy from David Geoffrey Evans about PCI/AGP graphics cards. I am in the same position as him and, before reading your reply, was ready to replace my motherboard with an AGP-enabled one. Now, though, I'm thinking of upgrading to one of the new Voodoo5 boards. Before I spend more than £200 on a PCI card, I wanted to know what difference there is between an AGP and a PCI card – other than where it goes in the computer. Will there be any visible reduction in graphic quality or frame rate? If there is no difference, why have AGP? If there is, why are the AGP and PCI versions of the card the same price? Perhaps upgrading my motherboard would still be a more viable option?

Tarquin Calder

A **The AGP bus can transfer information between the CPU, memory and graphics card much, much faster than PCI. It was specifically designed for the high demands made by graphics cards and has now**

evolved to four times its original speed. The bus type has no effect on the quality of the image, but it certainly will affect the frame rate as the video card can end up 'waiting' for data to travel down the comparatively slow PCI bus. Not all PCI and AGP cards are the same price, but yes, they're pretty close. Usually you pay a slight premium for the AGP model, but that's just because the manufacturers know only too well that you lot will pay a premium for extra performance – even though there's probably only a few pence difference in the manufacturing cost.

DOWNLOADS AND LOADS

Q I'm wondering if you can help me with a little problem. I have a 56K V.90 Winmodem installed and I get some strange download speeds. I've included pictures to confirm this, including one taken from Net.Medic: a brilliant program that tells you all kinds of information about your online connection. It shows that my maximum modem speed is 115.2Kbps and the connection speed as 192 per cent. I mean, what? Surely this is wrong? That said, my connection icon in the bottom right shows similar figures of the maximum, estimated at 115,200bps. I have no idea as to what is going on. Surely this can't be right, as I'm using a normal BT phone line and this happens about one out of five times I connect to the web using several different dial-up accounts. Other times I am lucky to get 2Kbps. Your help would be appreciated.

Gordon Handley

A **115,200bps is the speed your computer is talking to your modem, not the speed your modem is talking down the phone line. A V.90 modem will usually report something from 44,000 to 52,000bps. By the looks of things, you don't have the correct drivers loaded for your modem, which means that windows cannot configure it correctly when it initiates a call.**

On the second point, remember that download speed is only as fast as the slowest link. The Creative Labs site, for example, recently ground to a halt when it released Sound Blaster Live! drivers for Windows 2000 – sheer volume of traffic meant that even the fastest connection in the world wouldn't pull the data any quicker from the beleaguered web server. We've said it before and we'll say it again: when downloading, try to pick a time when the locals are in bed (between 6am and 12pm for US sites). You should see speeds improve considerably.

GRAPHICS OR GRUNT?

Q I'm looking to upgrade my machine. I have an Intel PII 400 with 128Mb RAM and a Voodoo2 card. Up until *Grand Prix 3* all the latest games have run fine, with full detail, but after having the computer a year and a half, I am anticipating that some games in the next few months may push it to its limits. I have a budget of around £250-£300 and at a push I could possibly stretch to £400. Would I be better off getting a new processor or a new graphics card? Would a new graphics card increase the life of my processor and which is the best? If I were to get a new processor would I require a new motherboard? What would you recommend?

James Crawley

A **You don't say which motherboard you have, so it's impossible to say if it could support an Intel PIII. Some PII boards will, some won't, others just need a flash BIOS update; the only way to be sure is to check the motherboard manufacturer's website. You can find links to most of these on** winfiles.cnet.com/drivers/bios.html **With that budget I think I would go for a shiny new GeForce card. This will breath some new life into your game playing.**



Get yourself GeForced up before you try playing *Grand Prix 3*.

The Cheatmistress Presents

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B - 02
Baldur's Gate
Batman Forever
Battlezone 1 & 2
Blade Runner
Blam, Machine Head
Blood
Braveheart
Brian Lara Cricket
Broken Sword 1 & 2
Business Tycoon
C - 03
Caesar 1, 2 & 3
Cannon Fodder
Carmageddon 1 & 2
Champ. Manager Series
Chasm: The Rift
Civilisation 1 & 2
Colin McRae Rally
Colonization
Comm. & Conq. Series
Commandos Series
Constructor
Croc: Legend of Gobbos
Crusaders of M & Magic
Cueball Jimmy White's 2
D - 04
Dark Forces
Dark Reign
Day of the Tentacle
Deathtrap Dungeon
Delta Force 1 & 2
Descent 1, 2 & 3
Destruction Derby 1 & 2
Deus-EX
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Driver
Duke Nukem Series
Dungeon Keeper 1 & 2
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E - 05
Earth 2150
Earthworm Jim 1 & 2
Emergency
Empire of the Ants
ESPN X Games
Euro 2000
Excalibur 2555 AD
Excessive Speed
Extreme Assault
Extreme Pinball
F - 06
F-22 Series
FA PL F'tball Man. 2000
Fatal Racing
FIFA Series
Final Doom
Final Fantasy 7 & 8
Firestorm
Flight Sim 98
Flight Unlimited 1 & 2
Flying Heroes
Formula 1 Series
Formula One Grand Prix
Forsaken
Frogger
Full Throttle
G - 07
Gabriel Knight 3
Gangsters
Gex
Goblins
Goosebumps
G-Police 1 & 2
Grand Prix Manager 2
Grand Touring
Grim Fandango
Ground Control
GTA 1, 2 & London
H - 08
Half Life
Half Life: Opp. Forces
Hardwar
Heavy Gear
Hercules
Heretic
Heroes Of M & M Series
Hexen 1 & 2
Hi Octane
Hidden and Dangerous
Homeworld
I - 09
Imperialism 2
Imperium Galactica
Incoming
Indiana Jones Series
Indianapolis
Int. Cricket Captain
Interstate 76 & Nitro
Iwar
J - 10
Jeff Gordon Ext. Racing
Judge Dredd
Jurassic Park
K - 11
Kingpin
Klingon Honor Guard
Knights and Merchants
L - 12
Lego Island
Lego Loco
Lego Racers
Lego Rock Raiders
Lemmings 2 & 3D
Links
Little Big Adventure 2
Longest Journey
Lords of Magic SE
M - 13
Machine Hunter
Madden NFL 97 & 98
Magic Carpet 1 & 2
Martian Gothic
Mass Destruction
Master of Orion 1 & 2
MDK 1 & 2
Mechcommander
Mechwarrior 2
Men in Black
Messiah
Microsoft Flight Sim 98
Midtown Madness
Monopoly
Monster Truck Mad. 1&2
Mortal Kombat Series
Moto Racer
Motocross Madness
Motorhead
Myth: The Fallen Lords
N - 14
Nascar 2
NBA Hangtime
NBA Jam Extreme
NBA Live Series95
Need For Speed 1,2 & 3
NFS: Porsche Unleashed
NFL Quarterback Club
NHL Series
Nightmare Creatures
Nox
Nuclear Strike
O - 15
Off. Formula 1 Racing
Omikron:Nomad Soul
Operation Bodycount
Outcast
Outlaws
Outrun
P - 16
Pandemonium 1 & 2
Pharoah
Pinball Fantasies
Pitfall
Planescape Torment
POD
Police Quest: Swat 2
Populous 1 & 2
Populous: The Beginning
Premier Manager Series
Prince of Persia
Pro Pinball
Q - 17
Quake 1, 2 & 3
R - 18
Railroad Tycoon 1 & 2
Rainbow Islands
Rainbow Six
Rally Champ. 2000
Rally Cross
Rayman
Redline
Requiem: Ave. Angels
Resident Evil 1 & 2
Revolt
Rival Realms
Road Rash
Rogue Spear & Urb. Ops
Rogue Squadron
Rollcage 1 & 2
Roller Coaster Tycoon
S - 19
S.C.A.R.S.
Sanatarium
Screamer 1 & 2
Screamer Rally
Sensible World of Soccer
Settlers 1, 2 & 3
Shogo Mobile Armor Div
Shogun: Total War
Silver
Sim City Series
Sim Theme Park
Sim Tower
Sims
SiN
Slave Zero
Soldier of Fortune
Sonic 3D Blast
Sonic and Knuckles Coll.
Soul Reaver:Leg. of Kain
South Park
Special Ops
Spectra Core
Star Lancer
Star Trek: Armada
Star Trek: Birth Of Fed.
Star Trek: Hidden Evil
Star Wars: Force Comm.
Star Wars: Phant. Men.
Star Wars: Racer
Star Wars: Rogue Squad.
Star Wars: S. Of Empire
StarCraft
Stonekeep
Street Fighter 2
Street Fighter Alpha
Super Bubsy
Super Frog
Superbike World Champ
Swat 3
SWIV 3D
Syndicate
Syndicate Wars
System Shock
T - 20
Tachyon: The Fringe
Take No Prisoners
Tarzan
Test Drive Series
The Curse Of M. Island
The Hunt for Red Oct.
The Settlers 1, 2 & 3
The Sims
Theme Hospital
Theme Park
Theme Park World
Thief 1 & 2
Tiberian Sun
Time Commando
TOCA 1 & 2
Tom Clancy's SSN
Tomb Raider 1, 2, 3 & 4
Total Annihilation
Total Ann.: Kingdoms
Toy Story 1 & 2
Trespasser
Triple Play 97, 98 & 99
Turok 1 & 2
U - 21
Ultima Underworld
Ultimate Soc Man Series
Unreal
Unreal Tournament
Urban Chaos
US Navy Fighters 1 & 97
V - 22
Vampire:Masq. Red.
Vigilante
Virtua Fighter
Virtual Springfield
Virus
VR Powerboat Racing
W - 23
War Games: Defcon 1
War Gods
Warcraft 1 & 2
Wargasm
Warhammer: D. Omen
Warzone 2100
Wing Commander IV
Wipeout & XL
Wolfenstein 3D
World Cup 98
Worms Series
WWF Wrestlemania
X - 24
X-Com Series
X-Files
X-Games Pro Boarder
X-Men: Child. Of Atom
X-Wing



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INTERNATIONAL ACCESS: +44 (0)700 5900 020

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Dreamcast. PlayStation GAME BOY COLOR SEGA SATURN PlayStation2 NINTENDO 64 PC

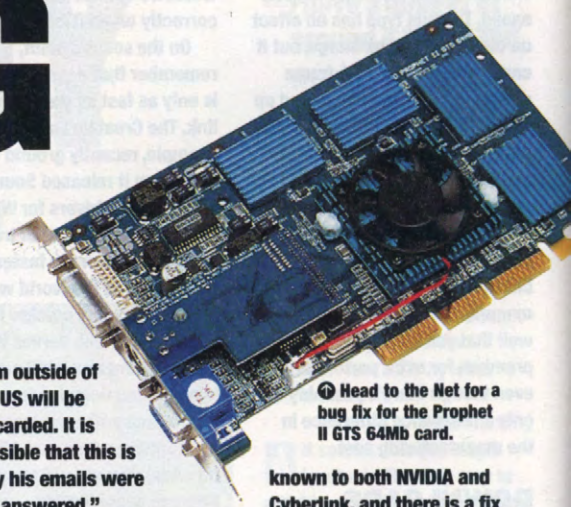
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Please ensure you have permission of the bill payer. Calls to the under 16 number have a maximum cost of £3.00 and will be terminated by forced release after 5 minutes. No restrictions apply to the over 16 number. Ensure you are calling from a touch tone phone. Please put comments or queries in writing to Interactive Telecom Ltd., 8 Grants Walk, PL25 5AA or call our Customer Service: 08700 885 656

WATCHDOG

The software industry can sometimes be a closed shop when it comes to punters and their complaints. Let *PC ZONE* ramraid their premises for you and snatch some answers...

MAN ON A MISSION Adam Philips



Head to the Net for a bug fix for the Prophet II GTS 64Mb card.

LIVING IN A WORLD O' HURT?

If you've got a consumer issue that needs addressing then drop us a line. Please remember that technical issues are not covered by Watchdog – if you've got a techie problem, then write to Dear Wandy (page 144).

WRITE TO Watchdog, *PC ZONE*, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1P 5FF

EMAIL Alternatively, email us at letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk with the subject heading **Watchdog**

DREADFUL DVD?

Q Back in July, I bought a 3D Prophet II GTS 64Mb and was pleased by the graphical results in the games I played. Unfortunately, I came across a few problems with the DVD hardware acceleration and the TV-Output.

I emailed Hercules in mid July to complain about getting black bars on the sides of my widescreen TV while using the TV-Output. I tried all the modes on my TV but always had black bars of some size on the sides. I have since found a hack program called TV-Tool that somehow fixes this but it isn't 100 per cent perfect.

I then discovered that the PowerDVD player bundled with the card does not support the card, ie no hardware DVD decoding. I emailed Hercules again near the end of July about this and the black bar problem. I still haven't received a reply to either of my emails.

It seems there's a free upgrade to PowerDVD 2.55 (from 2.5) on the Net, but it cripples the program by limiting the sound channels to two. The graphics card box claims the card delivers "the highest quality playback for DVD-Video Playback." This is a total lie as it's my CPU that has to do the work! Maybe I should have stuck with 3dfx...

Anthony Langford

A Guillemot, the makers of the card, had the following to say: "Firstly, I would ask that the person check which email address they used," offers a spokesperson for the company. "The Hercules.com technical email service is US-run and the page clearly states that mails from outside of the US will be discarded. It is possible that this is why his emails were not answered."

Regarding the black lines surrounding the image with the TV-Out, Guillemot says this occurs with all NVIDIA-based TV outputs: "TV-Out will output the image to fill the Minimum Viewable Area on all televisions. "This is a standard area which is supported by all TVs, although screens may actually be larger, resulting in a black frame around the edge of the picture. The UK Technical Support team recommends its callers use the TV-Tool fix."

As for the PowerDVD issue, Guillemot says this is a bug known to both NVIDIA and Cyberlink, and there is a fix on the Cyberlink website. NVIDIA's 5.22 drivers can also fix this problem.

It apologises for any inconvenience caused by the stray emails and urges customers to call where possible and speak directly to a technician, or to use extra caution when mailing: "to check that they are mailing the correct territory, since we cannot confirm that emails sent abroad will be answered by any respective territory."

Their new UK site is at www.hercules-uk.com which has full details of how to contact UK Technical Support.

THE LAND OF NO SERVICE

Is Gameplay bowing out of Japan?

Q As a PC user living in the land of the PlayStation 2 – Japan – I've been relying on Gameplay for the past few months for game purchases. This is not a query about their service as such, which has always been excellent. I've been an active customer and have bought about 13 titles over the last six or seven months.

Recently, however, Gameplay has made changes to its system, which requires users to re-register to continue using their service. The problem starts when registering, as you have to select the country where you live. Unfortunately, Japan is not listed in the countries list (although, somewhat bizarrely, Iceland is!) Therefore I can't register and continue using the service!

I want to keep using Gameplay and think I've been a loyal customer, and I've been a little surprised that they haven't even seen fit to reply to my three emails querying how I can register to use the service. It's been disappointing, as in the past I've always been happy with Gameplay's service and have even recommended it to other PC users living here in Japan. OK, so it may not be Gameplay's most lucrative market, but there's never been a problem before and I'm becoming a little irritated at being completely ignored when I ask what the problem is.

Robin Cannon

A Sounds like a raw deal, Robin. So is this a conscious move to pull out of the Japanese market or merely an oversight? Are they indeed ignoring you? Watchdog asked Gameplay's executive director, Dylan Wilk, for his take on the situation: "Far from ignoring Mr Cannon, we have actually been frantically trying to fix his problem and happily, Japan has now started to exist again on our website."

As for your emails seemingly falling on deaf ears, Dylan says: "The reason he feels neglected is that he emailed our Webmaster rather than our Customer Service team as directed on the website. The Web team requested information from the Customer Service team but did not make it clear that Mr Cannon needed a response, so the Customer Service people assumed that the Web people had replied to him. This meant that when you sent reminder emails, Gameplay's Web team contacted Customer Services for the same information, but again they did not make it clear that they had not responded to you themselves.



Japan – the land of the rising sun or the disappearing Gameplay service?

"Despite the confusion over the response, we fixed the problem very quickly and people in Japan need no longer feel envious of people living in Iceland," quips Dylan. "We are also investigating new software that will track all incoming mail and responses to highlight anybody that has not received a response within 24 hours to avoid this situation recurring."

He says Gameplay has "bowed in apology to Mr Cannon and has offered him the game he wanted free of charge to make up for the inconvenience."

SLAMMED AND DUNKED?

Q I feel that I must contact you for help, and to warn other users thinking about buying from theslammer.com. I am having a serious problem, which they can't seem to fix. I attempted to purchase *Seven Kingdoms 2* for the PC on July 1, with the knowledge that it would take, at the longest, 72 hours to reach me.

I sent an email on July 12, after receiving no reply from their 'order track' system. I received a phone call the next day saying the game was old and that it was not in stock, but they were sorting it out and it should only take a few days to arrive.

One week later and nothing had arrived. So I sent another email, but this time I threatened to contact Trading Standards because I found out the money had been withdrawn from my bank account on July 10. This was the total opposite to what the site had said about debiting accounts. I received another phone call the next day apologising about the problem and they said they would send me a free game for the hassle



Seven Kingdoms 2: the online shopping drama continues.

(*Hexen 2* just in case you were wondering).

I got the free game a few days later, but my ordered game was nowhere in sight. I sent one last email to them on August 5, but have heard nothing from them since I got my free game – not even the usual day-after-email phone call.

Chi-Kin Nam

A Oh Gawd, online shopping, eh? Off Watchdog trotted to visit the inmates at theslammer.com to find out where your game had vanished to. "I have looked into this matter and the course of events have been made clear to me by customer service staff," says a spokesperson for the company. "Mr Chi-Kin Nam placed the order with us last month for *Seven Kingdoms 2*. Unfortunately that title was out of stock from our distributors."

The company clams it then phoned you to inform you of the delay and, because of the wait, offered you a free game as a goodwill gesture: "The game itself finally came back into stock and was sent out on August 21 via first class recorded delivery.

"It was not our intention and never an intention of ours not to supply customers with their goods, as customer service is a priority for us here at theslammer.com. Mr Nam has subsequently ordered a PIII Computer from us."

Let us know if you got your PIII OK, Chi-Kin ;-)

WOT FREE GAME?!?

Q Earlier this year I ordered a title from Gameplay. It states in the ad: "you will receive two free games" and it also says: "there is no minimum order value to qualify." Sometime later I received the game, but without the two free games. So I phoned up the sales hotline and asked them for my two free games plus a catalogue and a catalogue CD. The man said he would send them to me.

Meanwhile, I saw a cheap game at Gameplay with the "two free games" offer again. So I ordered it and received the game just before I went on holiday. But once again, it didn't come with its two free games. It's been almost four weeks now and I still haven't received my first two free games, the catalogue or the catalogue CD – even after enquiring.

So, I would now like to receive my four free games, along with the catalogue and the catalogue CD I was promised.

Andy Swinscoe

> **"The money had been withdrawn from my account. This was the opposite to what the site had said about debiting my account"**
>
> **CHI-KIN NAM, WHO HAS A PROBLEM WITH THESLAMMER.COM**

A Ho, hum. Come on Gameplay. What's going on? Gameplay's Dylan Wilks steps forward again: "Firstly, the inclusion of free gifts with orders is not automatic. We ask customers to request them at the time of ordering should they wish to receive them. This is because in the past we have found that receiving unexpected games with an order can lead to confusion, and some people become concerned that they may have been charged for them."

According to Dylan, for customers who order via the phone and request a free gift, the operator provides them with a list of available gifts and adds the caller's choice to the order. So what happened in Andy's case? "Naturally we regret that Mr Swinscoe has not received free software on both orders," offers Dylan. "Taking Mr Swinscoe's age into account [13], it is plausible that the person who ordered by credit card on his behalf neglected to ask for the free gifts at the time of ordering, perhaps not realising that the gifts needed to be specially requested. With reference to Mr Swinscoe's call to the sales hotline after the first order arrived, I can only assume the call was not logged. This could have been because the operator requested to speak to the cardholder before any action was taken."

Dylan says he appreciates the level of service Andy received has, "annoyed Mr Swinscoe and as such we will endeavour to restore his faith in Gameplay. Furthermore, I will also take Mr Swinscoe's views on board as a means to improve the service we offer and I am thinking about the best way to avoid this problem recurring."

Dylan says that he has been in contact with you and that the problem has been resolved to your satisfaction. Let us know if you have any further problems or queries, Andy.

READ ME

If you are writing in to complain about a product, whether it be a ropey piece of software or a shoddy PC, please supply us with your full name, address and contact number. With PCs especially, make sure that you also include all purchasing details such as reference and invoice numbers. It means that we can resolve your problems much quicker.

PC ZONE

COMING NEXT ISSUE

SEVERANCE: BLADE OF DARKNESS



WORLD EXCLUSIVE REVIEW AND DEMO

Violence in games? Good or bad? You can judge for yourself next issue because, as well as the world exclusive review of *Severance: Blade of Darkness*, you should – God willing – be able to try out our exclusive playable demo as well. And, if we all keep our fingers crossed, we'll have exclusive demos of *Midtown Madness 2*, *Homeworld: Cataclysm* and *Champ Man 00/01*. What else? Reviews of *Sacrifice*, *Deep Space Nine: The Fallen*, *Battle Isle IV* and *Blair Witch Volume 2*. Exciting, eh?

ON SALE THURSDAY 16 NOVEMBER

WHAT'S ON YOUR HARD DRIVE?

Thought your hard disk content was safely hidden from the world did you? Eh? You know you can't keep secrets from us...

VENUE Oxford Street, London **YOUR HOST** Martin Korda



CHRIS STRIPE
Banker, 34

What's on your hard drive?
"*AOEII*, and this game I've been playing all morning. I can't remember what it's called."
That memorable was it?
"No, it's good, I just can't remember its name. It's a FPS."
OK... What are you looking forward to playing?
"*Earth 2150* and the expansion pack for *AOEII*."
Should the next *AOE* game be in 3D?
"Definitely, it needs to move with the times."



CALID SHOWER
Student, 21

What's on your hard drive?
"*Planescape: Torment*."
What are you looking forward to playing?
"I'm thinking about buying *The Sims*."
What things are you looking forward to doing to your Sims?
"Ha ha ha ha. I'm looking forward to making a little nuclear family."
Come on, what about something sadistic? Go on you can share your ideas with us.
"I think I'd better not, actually."



JIM CATHESON
Teacher, 54

What's on your hard drive?
"I'm not really a games player. I'm actually looking for my first game."
So what kind of games would interest you?
"Slow-paced strategy games, ones where you have to think carefully about what you're doing. My sister recommended *Riven*."
Actually, that might put you off games. Why don't you try *Civilization* instead?
"Has it got a great deal of thinking and planning in it?"
Sure has.



MAIA THAUNG
Works at HMV, 23

What's on your hard drive?
"*FFVII* and VIII, a demo of *Heavy Metal: FAKK 2*, *Dungeon Keeper 2* and *Nocturne*."
Who's the fittest computer sprite you've ever seen?
"Definitely the woman from *Heavy Metal: FAKK 2*."
Why?
"Because she's just the absolute best when she's animated, honest."
I'm sure she's Intelligent too, no doubt.
Oh yeah, that too, of course.



PHILLIP MITCHELMORE
Student, 19

What's on your hard drive?
"*EA Rugby 2001*."
What did you think of it? Was it realistic?
"Not entirely realistic, but it's quite close."
You a rugby player yourself?
"Yeah, I'm a flanker."
You any good?
"Not really no, I just enjoy playing it."
What are you looking forward to playing?
"Some good new sports games."



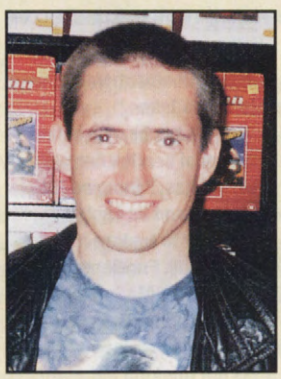
STEVE PLATT
Executive Officer, 28

What's on your hard drive?
"*FIFA 2000*, *FA Premier League Stars* and *Jimmy White's 2: Cueball*."
So, are you a bit of an athlete yourself?
"No, I just enjoy watching sport."
Why hasn't Jimmy White ever won the World Championship?
"He's an exciting player, but he's just too quick."
What are you looking forward to playing?
"I can't wait to get my hands on *GP3*."



MIKE THIRIA
Pharmacist, 34

What's on your hard drive?
"*Diablo II* and *Baldur's Gate*."
Which one's better?
Diablo II. The action is superb and there's loads to do."
What kind of character do you play in the game?
"A Paladin. I like the fact that they're so versatile."
What are you looking forward to playing?
"I'm really excited about *Icewind Dale* coming out. It really does look as if it's going to be fantastic."



ALAN SMITH
Insurance Clerk, 26

What's on your hard drive?
Icewind Dale. I'm also really into using Cubase for recording my own music."
What instruments do you play?
"Keyboards, viola, recorder and piano."
Interesting mix. When are we going to see you on *Top Of The Pops*?
Ha ha ha. Actually I've got my own CD out. You can find it at **peoplesound.com**. Just go to The Specialist, and you'll find it there.
Excellent, we'll check that out.



JIM HILL
IT Support, 24

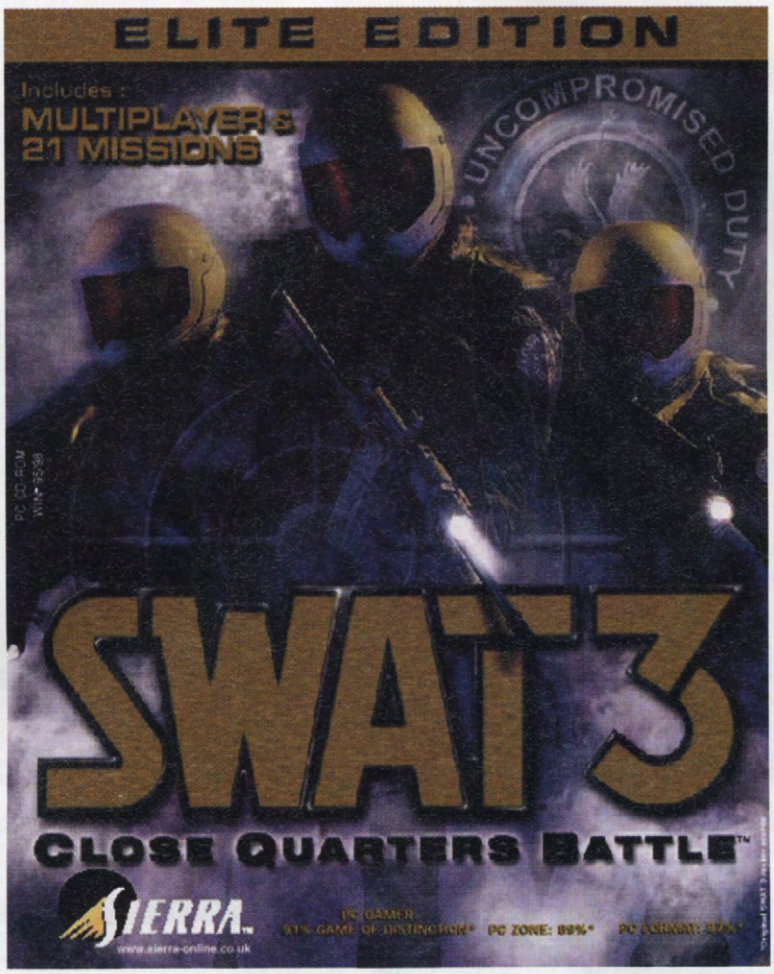
What's on your hard drive?
"*Diablo II*, *Shogun*, *Icewind Dale* and *Quake III*."
Out of that lot, which one's your favourite and why?
"*Diablo II*. It's loads of fun, especially when me and my mates play it over a network."
What are you looking forward to playing?
"*Baldur's Gate II*. I've walked all the way down here in the rain, only to find it's not out yet."
You can spend your money on an umbrella instead.



ANDY ANDREAS
Royal Mail Driver, 38

What's on your hard drive?
"*Civilisation II: Test of Time*. *Alpha Centauri*, *Starfleet Command* and *Unreal Tournament*."
Why are you such a turn-based fan?
"RTS is too manic, I think."
Do you think that with most RTS games it's just a case of numbers, not strategy?
"Yeah, there's not enough strategy in them. It just comes down to who can out produce who. As far as I'm concerned, that's not strategy."

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PCZONE TOP100

Welcome to the definitive buyers' guide for all discerning PC gamers. The games that grace these pages represent the best titles across all genres. Check here for regular updates

This is the new *PC ZONE* Top 100. Within it you will find the best games you can currently buy for your PC. All the games here deserve a place in our illustrious Top 100 as we go to print, but that could all change next month when newer titles come in and older games receive new ratings to reflect where they stand in the great scheme of things. Shrewd buyers will always check here first before parting with their money.

BENCHMARK GAME

Benchmark titles are the games that you simply must have if you are a fan of the genre. They are considered by the *PC ZONE* team to be absolute classics and should be bought without hesitation. All new games are compared to their genre's benchmark title when they are reviewed. Bear this in mind before writing into Mailbox complaining that the latest 3D shooter didn't automatically get 90 per cent: check here first to see what it's up against! Additionally, all games in that genre will receive a new rating every time a new benchmark title comes along.

NEW ENTRY

In the wonderful world of PC gaming, new titles come in every month, some of which are better than the games currently in the Top 100. When this happens, they will gain their rightful place in the Top 100 and lesser titles will drop out to make room for them.

BUDGET

If a game in the Top 100 is available on budget, it will be tagged accordingly. Games that are lower in price than other titles in their genre do not necessarily receive a new score to reflect this. The latest score the game received will still apply – it's up to you to decide whether or not the game is worth buying at its new price point.



Under the *ZONE* scoring system, new games will have to be pretty spectacular to receive this award. They will have to take their genre to unprecedented new heights and represent a major step forward for PC gaming. There are now very few titles that can justifiably be described as *PC ZONE* Classics. This trend will continue across all genres. Generally speaking, all *ZONE* Classics are must-have titles – the benchmark title being the definitive game of the genre – but that does not mean you should discount games that score 80+ per cent. These games receive the *PC ZONE* Award For Excellence and are essential buys if you are a fan of the genre the game fits into. Classics, on the other hand, are games we think will appeal to everyone and will bring new fans to that particular genre. There will not be many of them, but when we say a game is a classic, we *mean* it.

Buy on-line www.jakarta.co.uk

FIRST-PERSON SHOOTERS

HALF-LIFE



PCZ #71 • 95%

Taking the first-person shooter as its starting point, *Half-Life* redefines the genre with an engrossing story, cracking atmosphere and some of the best AI ever coded. *Half-Life* is probably still the best game you can install on your PC, and it's now available with the superb *Opposing Force* add-on in the 'Generations' pack.

PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 9209 100



UNREAL TOURNAMENT — PCZ #81 • 90%

Played over a network or the Internet, *Unreal Tournament* is more than a match for *Quake III*'s multiplayer, with a combination of well-designed maps and diverse gameplay. The single-player mode might be too short, but it's still going to be more than a challenge for most.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 020 7738 8199



QUAKE III ARENA — PCZ #87 • 89%

The biggest brand name in PC gaming is back. The sheer speed, intensity and unrelenting action of *Quake III* make it an essential purchase for all shoot 'em up fans, but sadly the lack of variety prevents it from topping *Unreal Tournament*.

PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456700



STAR TREK: VOYAGER – ELITE FORCE — PCZ #94 84%

The first single-player game to use the *Quake III* engine, *Voyager* offers enough thrills to please even the hardest of Trekkie haters. A new scripting system and some clever team fighting by your side, renew faith in an increasingly multiplayer genre.

PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456700



THIEF II: THE METAL AGE — PCZ #88 • 82%

The original *Thief* set new standards in FPS titles with its move away from mindless action towards stealth and its excellent use of light and sound. This sequel delivers more of the same quality gameplay, minus the out-of-place zombie levels.

PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000



ALIENS VS PREDATOR — PCZ #77 • 81%

It might not be the best FPS you can buy, but it's definitely the scariest. *Aliens Vs Predator* is also the only game that offers three distinct ways of playing through the game, so if you're looking for a solid single-player blast, this provides excellent value for money.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442



SOLDIER OF FORTUNE — PCZ #89 • 80%

More like an arcade explosion of unmitigated violence than a FPS in the *Half-Life* mould, *SoF* is a great deal of fun. It's also very sick. If you can stomach amputations and decapitations, then we can guarantee you pure, mindless entertainment.

PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456700



KISS PSYCHO CIRCUS — PCZ #93 • 78%

The team of *Daikatana*-defectors have come up with a much better game – using the LithTech engine and basing the levels on songs by Kiss. This is not cutting-edge gaming, but you'll find it is a solid, fun shooter.

PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900



KINGPIN: LIFE OF CRIME — PCZ #77 • 77%

This controversial title should be talked about for its excellent gameplay and graphics rather than its violence and swearing. Because, quite frankly, that side of the game was crap. We still stand by the game, though. It's classic adult entertainment.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666



SHOGO: MOBILE ARMOUR DIVISION — PCZ #71 • 76%

Half *Quake* and half *MechWarrior*, this game breathes fresh air into a stale genre. Boasting great graphics and a good storyline, its only faults are iffy AI and the fact that it's a bit too easy for hardcore *Quake* fans.

PUBLISHER Microids • 00 33 1 4601 5401

STRATEGY

SHOGUN: TOTAL WAR



PCZ #89 • 93%

Shogun is the first strategy game that has blown us away in a long time. Command enormous armies in epic and bloody battles, send ninjas to assassinate enemy generals and conquer your way through the map of feudal Japan. The 3D engine works beautifully and the in-game options never get in the way of instant playability.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442



AGE OF EMPIRES II — PCZ #84 • 88%

It might not be radically different from the original, but sometimes evolution is just as good as revolution. In *AoE II*, the gameplay has been honed to perfection with balanced units and strong single and multiplayer campaigns. Forget the hype of *Tiberian Sun* and opt for this classic RTS.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002000



GROUND CONTROL — PCZ #92 • 87%

RTSs are increasingly dropping resource management in order to concentrate on strategy. *Ground Control* pulls this off with flair, gorgeous looks and a brilliant camera. If you're after a 3D strategy title but don't fancy samurais, this is the answer.

PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 920 9100



CIVILIZATION II: TEST OF TIME — PCZ #68 • 86%

A title that lives up to its name, *Civilization II* is probably the oldest game in the Top 100 and it will probably still be around in years to come. Turn-based and in 2D, it offers unlimited replayability and depth. One of the few games that everyone should own.

PUBLISHER Hasbro • 020 8569 1234



EARTH 2150 — PCZ #90 • 84%

A fantastic 3D engine and great detail team up with sheer playability to make this one of the best RTSs around. Second only to *Shogun* this year, *Earth 2150* is a more traditional strategy title, but it takes the genre even further than it has been before.

PUBLISHER Mattel Interactive • 0144 424 6333



C&C: RED ALERT 2 — PCZ #95 • 82%

NEW ENTRY After the disappointment of *Tiberian Sun* we weren't expecting much from this sequel, but we were pleasantly surprised. *RA2* manages to mix a believable story line with enhanced gameplay and extremely versatile units. An entertaining sequel.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442



HOMEWORLD — PCZ #82 • 80%

Homeworld delivers the dream of millions of PC strategists the world over: a fully three-dimensional, strategic experience. The vast expanse of space is the battleground, the hundreds of ships at your command the weapon – and the only limit is your imagination.

PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 920 9100



IMPERIUM GALACTICA II — PCZ #85 • 79%

Space expansion and empire building have never looked so good. This title boasts the depth of a turn-based strategy game with the immediate action of real-time, plus a great interface and tutorial, which means you'll know your way around in no time.

PUBLISHER GT Interactive • 020 7258 3791



TOTAL ANNIHILATION — PCZ #56 • 78%

With a ridiculous number of units and unrivalled pace, the original *TA* still stands head and shoulders above more recent efforts. No story to speak of and weak single-player action, but still, for a tenner, no one should be without a copy.

PUBLISHER GT Interactive • 020 7258 3791



THEOCRACY — PCZ #88 • 77%

Blending the best of *Age Of Empires* and *Civilization*, *Theocracy*'s mix of real-time and turn-based gameplay allows you to guide the Aztecs through history and attempt to right the wrongs of the Hispanic conquerors. In short, an unexpected gem.

PUBLISHER Ubi Soft • 020 8944 9000

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ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

DEUS EX



PCZ #93 • 94%

✪ Warren Spector takes the finer elements of *Half-Life*, *System Shock 2* and *Thief* and weaves an RPG of complex beauty that revolutionises computer games. A fascinating sci-fi plot and complete player freedom are just some of the reasons why *Deus Ex* is such a landmark wonder.

PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive • 020 8636 3000



SYSTEM SHOCK 2 — PCZ #80 • 91%

✪ Definitely one of the most compelling, original and disturbing games to hit the PC, *System Shock 2* manages to successfully mix the genres of role-playing, action and adventure into one. Play it in the house on your own with the lights off to prove how hard you are.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442



VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE – REDEMPTION — PCZ #92 • 89%

✪ This amazing RPG is a treat to play. An epic storyline, tactical combat and great acting and music more than make up for the fact that it's a linear hack 'n' slash game at heart.

PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456 7000



PLANESCAPE: TORMENT — PCZ #87 • 87%

✪ An incredible game from Black Isle, creators of *Baldur's Gate*. It's a dark, adult scorcher of an RPG. Moreover, the character development is the best we've seen in any game of its kind and the story is compelling, with well-scripted dialogue.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666



BALDUR'S GATE — PCZ #73 • 80%

✪ With every developer going 3D these days, it's refreshing to find an old-school RPG that combines traditional D&D role-playing with sumptuous 2D graphics. In a nutshell, *Baldur's Gate* is intelligent and involving in equal measures.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666



FINAL FANTASY VII — PCZ #66 • 80%

✪ Despite the recent release of *FFVIII*, we still rate this earlier episode in the series above it. The story is better, there are more subgames and the whole thing is more involving, especially if you like Japanese-style cartoony graphics. And it should be out on budget soon.

PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive • 020 8636 3000



FALLOUT 2 — PCZ #71 • 79%

✪ Does exactly what it says on the tin. Twice as big as the original, but utilising the exact same engine. If you liked the first game, you'll love this – not twice as much, but certainly for twice as long. A real life-sapper and one of the best RPGs money can buy.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666



ICEWIND DALE — PCZ #93 • 75%

✪ Despite the introduction of larger enemies, *Icewind Dale* is little more than an add-on pack for *Baldur's Gate*. It looks the same and it plays the same, which isn't surprising since it's made by the same people. Very good, but we'll wait for *BG2*.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666



DIABLO II — PCZ #93 • 72%

✪ Blizzard might have repackaged the original *Diablo* and produced an even bigger version with the same graphics and gameplay, but its fans aren't complaining. It's already one of the hottest and biggest-selling games ever.

PUBLISHER Havas Interactive • 0118 920 9100



ODIUM — PCZ #87 • 70%

✪ Imagine an RPG in the style of *Final Fantasy* with battle sequences à la *X-COM* and you'll have a pretty good idea of what *Odium* is like. The story is set in a European city populated by UN soldiers and a variety of monsters. In short, it's curiously compelling and it will keep you hooked for a while.

PUBLISHER Ubi Soft • 020 8944 9000

ACTION/ADVENTURES

GRIM FANDANGO



PCZ #71 • 88%

✪ If you've followed the successes of LucasArts from the early days of *Monkey Island*, *Sam & Max* and *Day Of The Tentacle*, this is a must-buy. Sublime graphics and genuine humour ensure it's a classic of its genre. A word of warning: it's bloody hard and, if your mind doesn't work laterally, you'll be playing it until the day you die.

PUBLISHER LucasArts • 020 7368 2255



DISCWORLD NOIR — PCZ #79 • 87%

✪ Although the point-and-click adventure genre is dying, *Discworld Noir* is very much alive. It's darker in style than previous *Discworld* games and is all the better for it in our opinion, particularly if you're not a fan of Terry Pratchett's zany, off-the-wall humour. Don't miss it.

PUBLISHER GT Interactive • 020 7258 3791



THE NOMAD SOUL — PCZ #83 • 86%

✪ Distinctly odd, but original, *The Nomad Soul* is a huge, intricate world populated by lap-dancers and David Bowie. At turns adventure, beat 'em up and platformer, it's insanely ambitious and almost manages to pull it off.

PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000



INDIANA JONES AND THE INFERNAL MACHINE — PCZ #84 • 86%

✪ LucasArts moves away from the point-and-click genre and into *Tomb Raider* territory for its latest *Indy*, with the adventure elements still in place.

PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456 7000



MESSIAH — PCZ #85 • 82%

✪ Shiny's wonderful shooter features a chubby cherub, but also a bunch of whores and lots of gratuitous swearing. As Bob, under-age agent of God, you must possess people's bodies and, like a good and typically hypocritical Christian, kill everything that gets in your way.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666



RESIDENT EVIL 3: NEMESIS — PCZ #94 81%

✪ Not a vast improvement on its predecessor, but unlike most PS conversions, you can pump up the resolution as high as you want it. The usual array of zombies are joined by more special monsters and it keeps the George Romero spirit alive – or dead.

PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000



NOCTURNE — PCZ #84 • 80%

✪ Why would you pay good money to be scared? Because it's damn good fun, and if you find the average PC game laughable, we dare you to sit through *Nocturne* with your curtains drawn. It's a beautiful exercise in computer-generated fear.

PUBLISHER Take 2 • 01753 722900



MONKEY ISLAND BOUNTY PACK — PCZ #74 • 80%

✪ *Monkey Island 1* and *2* are perhaps the finest point-and-clickers ever to grace the PC. The third outing may have been disappointing, but it would be a sin to exclude it from this excellent triple pack.

PUBLISHER LucasArts/Activision • 01985 4567000



TOMB RAIDER: THE LAST REVELATION — PCZ #83 • 79%

✪ Lara's back in her fourth and best adventure so far. More moves, better looks, intricate puzzles and a well-developed plot. It's not going to win over the cynics, but it's still a decent game.

PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive • 020 8636 3000



SAM & MAX AND DAY OF THE TENTACLE — NOT REVIEWED • 78%

✪ Two of the finest adventure games in the world are now available in a single pack for a bargain price. They still match most titles that are released today, so go and buy them now.

PUBLISHER LucasArts/Activision • 01985 4567000

Buy on-line www.jakarta.co.uk

RACING GAMES

MIDTOWN MADNESS



PCZ #79 • 85%

Jump in your car and drive around Chicago participating in races, annoying the police, or just cruising around. Not quite *Grand Theft Auto 3D*, but just as much fun. This is definitely the best all-out arcade racer you can currently buy on the PC. And that is exactly why it raced into pole position in our driving supertest ahead of everything else.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002000



COLIN MCRAE RALLY — PCZ #68 • 85%

Sporting an updated *TOCA* engine, *Colin McRae* is still the benchmark in rally simulations. It boasts realistic handling, car customisation and stacks of multiplayer options, which all contribute to keeping it well ahead of its rivals. It's now available as a budget title, which makes it an absolute steal.

PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132



LE MANS 24 HOURS — PCZ #87 • 82%

Although not quite as challenging as the race it's based on, *Le Mans 24 Hours* is a driving game for skillful players who know their brakes from their elbows. You can even get involved in a rewarding career mode, culminating in the famous race itself.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 020 7738 8199



GRAND PRIX 3 — PCZ #94 80%

This F1 title displays all the customary Crammond perfectionism. The detail is amazing, which makes it all the more puzzling as to why there is no team work. Don't expect much more than a 3D accelerated *GP2*, but if that's what you're after you'll love it.

PUBLISHER Hasbro Interactive • 020 8569 1234



NEED FOR SPEED PORSCHE 2000 — PCZ #90 • 79%

Not as good as hooking up with your mates at the arcade, but still a damn good conversion of a damn fine game. Forget realism and concentrate on flinging your car around the track as fast as you can. Who needs depth when racing is this exciting?

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442



RALLY MASTERS — PCZ #89 • 79%

Rally games tend to blend into one another quite seamlessly. After all, the cars look exactly the same and they go round the same tracks. *Rally Masters*, however, offers the all-important feel of a great driving game together with loads of options and some tasty graphics.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 020 7738 8199



TOCA 2 — PCZ #76 • 78%

Predictably, Codemasters has gone and done it again. More cars, more tracks and the same stunning attention to detail make *TOCA 2* an essential purchase for petrolheads. Graphically, it may not be a massive improvement, but gameplay-wise it definitely is.

PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132



RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP — PCZ #84 • 77%

Close, but no *McRae*. That was the verdict from the boy Hill on this new racer. It looks fantastic and the on-screen Ordnance Survey map is a nice touch, but it's let down by some poor camera angles and unnecessarily solid obstacles. Ouch.

PUBLISHER Actualise • 01625 855015



MOTOCROSS MADNESS 2 — PCZ #92 • 77%

More mad two-wheeled antics in a sequel that doesn't improve on the original, apart from the graphical update. It's still fun and far removed from reality, but you might want to track down the first one in the bargain bin.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002000



SUPERBIKE 2000 — PCZ #88 • 75%

The best motorcycling sim on the PC, this game sports incredible visuals, slick handling and astonishing detail. But it's too easy to fall off unless you use computer-assisted help. However, for pure two-wheeled action, *Motocross Madness* is still the best option.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

FLIGHT SIMULATORS

FALCON 4



PCZ #72 • 89%

We waited patiently for years for this title to arrive, and the good news is that, for once, we weren't disappointed. *Falcon 4* sports beautiful 3D-accelerated graphics and a dynamic campaign structure that leaves the competition standing. If you're going to buy one flight sim, make it this one – we guarantee that you won't be disappointed.

PUBLISHER MicroProse • 01454 893893



F-22 TOTAL AIR WAR — PCZ #68 • 87%

This full-price new version of DID's masterpiece may seem a bit of a rip-off for anyone who already owns *F-22 ADF*, but those of you who are looking to buy one of the greatest combat sims of recent years should seriously consider this title.

PUBLISHER Ocean/DID • 0161 832 6633



F/A-18E SUPER HORNET — PCZ #83 • 86%

If you like your flight sims to be realistic with a great big capital 'R', look no further. In fact, this game is so life-like that the US navy has adopted it for promotional work and ground-based familiarity training. But make sure you watch out for friendly fire.

PUBLISHER Titus Software • 01926 335 5400



MIG ALLEY — PCZ #80 • 86%

MiG Alley gives hardcore flight simmers' piloting skills a run for their money, but don't let that put you off. If you're willing to put in the work, this title will repay you with a wealth of excellent in-flight graphics and a selection of brilliant mission-planning elements.

PUBLISHER Empire Interactive • 020 8343 7337



FLIGHT UNLIMITED III — PCZ #82 • 85%

For all those sim aficionados who enjoy the experience of flying for its own sake rather than as a lame excuse for blasting other flying things to bits, this (along with the *Flight Sim* series) is an object of worship and devotion. It certainly deserves high praise.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442



FLANKER 2.0 — PCZ #85 • 84%

Hardcore pilots with a taste for Yankie blood need look no further. Extremely hard to fly, but very rewarding nevertheless, *Flanker 2.0* recreates the real thing in minute detail. However, be warned: hours of practice are needed before you can go off shooting stuff.

PUBLISHER SSI • 01293 651300



ENEMY ENGAGED: COMANCHE HOKUM — PCZ #89 • 84%

The latest helicopter sim to hit the shelves, it is also the best one to date. In no other game do you feel the excitement of being involved in a real war, largely due to an excellent dynamic campaign mode.

PUBLISHER Empire Interactive • 020 8343 7337



JANE'S USAF — PCZ #88 • 82%

USAF offers playability that allows non-hardcore flyers to have a successful spin. While this means that the standards of realism are nowhere near other titles, it fills the gap for those of us who don't care about such things. This is a great flight sim that anybody can enjoy.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442



JANE'S F/A-18 — PCZ #89 • 82%

Another game based on the US Navy's Super Hornet, this is an incredibly detailed jet sim that suffers slightly from being too hard for beginners. Graphically, it's up there with the best and the interface makes you feel as close to the real thing as is possible on a desktop.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442



TEAM ALLIGATOR — PCZ #85 • 80%

Helicopter sims are rare but when they do appear on the scene they are usually superb. Although *Team Alligator* doesn't quite surpass the cheaper *Apache Havoc*, it has truly beautiful graphics and feels great to fly. Without doubt, the best Russian chopper sim around.

PUBLISHER GT Interactive • 020 7258 3791

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SPORTS

FIFA 2000



PCZ #84 • 86%

The *FIFA* franchise has been rolling on for years and it gets better each time. Although it missed a Classic rating by a whisker, *FIFA 2000* is still the best conversion of the finest sport known to man. You should be able to find it on budget soon. Or you could always fork out the full price for the recent *Euro 2000*, which is essentially the same game.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442



SUPREME SNOWBOARDING — PCZ #85 • 85%

Snowboarding is not a sport you'd expect to captivate a PC audience, but this game gives as exhilarating an experience as you could hope for without breaking a leg. Oh, and all the streetwise attitude you'd expect, of course.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 020 8738 8199



PGA CHAMPIONSHIP GOLF 2000 — PCZ #92 • 84%

It's really not much different from last year's title, but this edition has enough subtle tweaks to make it a worthy purchase. It also has the best control system we've seen in what is definitely the best golf game available.

PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 920 9100



NBA LIVE 2000 — PCZ #85 • 82%

As slick as always, but what makes this special is the inclusion of teams from the '50s onwards, comedy haircuts and all. It's not quite as immediate as *Inside Drive*, it's a more complete simulation of the sport all round.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442



OPEN TENNIS 2000 — PCZ #92 • 81%

Not since *Super Tennis* on the SNES have we had so much fun hitting a ball over a net. After some initial reluctance, the whole office stopped fragging and started lobbing. Very playable and unsurpassed in multiplayer.

PUBLISHER Cryo • 0121 250 5070

SPACE COMBAT

X – BEYOND THE FRONTIER



PCZ #82 • 87%

The spirit of *Elite* lives on in this massive trading epic from Germany, in which you must buy and fight your way back home to Earth. The combat side of the gameplay may not be the best on offer, but with goods to trade and races to discover, it rewards patience with variety and months of play. This title is deeply hypnotic and beautiful, rather than tense and frenetic.

PUBLISHER THQ • 01483 767656



TERMINUS — PCZ #93 • 86%

Who says the days of independent bedroom programming are over? *Terminus* proves you can make a great game on your own if you have the talent and the passion. It just edges out *FreeSpace 2*.

PUBLISHER Vicarious Visions • www.vvisions.com



FREESPACE 2 — PCZ #84 • 85%

Completely different from *X*, *FreeSpace 2* offers fast-paced dogfighting action all the way. It boasts a superb interface, epic story and amazing graphics, but it's a bit short-lived if you don't play online.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 020 7551 4222



X-WING: ALLIANCE — PCZ #77 • 81%

At last! Fly the Millennium Falcon in the final episode of the long-running *X-Wing* series. Certainly the best-looking *X-Wing* game to date, *Alliance* is slow at first, but boy does it pick up later on.

PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456700



STARLANCER — PCZ #91 • 80%

While *Starlancer* doesn't do anything startlingly new, it is a highly polished affair with compulsive gameplay and gorgeous visuals. A must for space sim fans.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002 000

MANAGEMENT

CM 99/2000



PCZ #84 • 92%

This is more than just a game, it's a way of life, according to the fans of the best football management game in existence. If you dare to play it, you can forget about your social life and expect to spend hours every day poring over unknown players in a bid to discover the next Ronaldo. The word 'benchmark' doesn't really describe how much better than the competition this game is.

PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000



THE SIMS — PCZ #87 • 85%

This game offers a staggering amount of possibilities. Essentially, you create your own person, or family, and guide them through the ups and downs of life. It's the definitive docu-soap and makes for compelling gameplay.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442



CAESAR III — PCZ #70 • 84%

Starting from scratch, you've got to build a majestic Roman city and ensure a harmonious life for your citizens. So what? So it's utterly absorbing and probably the most addictive god sim in existence.

PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 920 9100



SIMCITY 3000 — PCZ #74 • 83%

Ten years on, *SimCity* remains as addictive as it ever was. Little was broken, and little was fixed. With new buildings to try out and an enhanced transport system, *SimCity 3000* is a must for old-timers and new addicts alike.

PUBLISHER Maxis/EA • 01753 549442



ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON — PCZ #75 · 82%

Pack out your own theme park with the most fiendish rides your imagination can conjure up. From rickety wooden dippers to *Nemesis*-style, white-knuckle gurners, *RT* is hugely addictive.

PUBLISHER Hasbro Interactive • 020 8569 1234

3D ACTION/STRATEGY

HIDDEN & DANGEROUS



PCZ #79 • 90%

You don't get a second chance in a real war, and *Hidden & Dangerous* is the game that comes closest to putting you in the middle of hell on earth. From the first mission it grabs you by the balls and doesn't let up until you're dead, with a bullet in the head. As a strategic shoot 'em up, games don't get any harder, or more compelling and atmospheric.

PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900



SWAT 3 — PCZ #85 • 87%

Artificial intelligence doesn't get any better than this. Add some truly spectacular graphics, an ingenious command interface and edge-of-your-seat gameplay, and you've got a top title.

PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 920 9100



GIANTS — PCZ #95 • 85%

NEW ENTRY This mammoth and origianl 3D action/strategy game, includes third-person shooter, RTS, RPG and real-time combat elements. It also features a superbly balanced multiplayer option.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666



ROGUE SPEAR — PCZ #84 • 83%

We loved *Rainbow Six* and, although this follow-up can't match *Hidden & Dangerous* for intensity, it's a superb romp through the world of terrorism. Pick your team, kit them out and plan your missions carefully.

PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900



BATTLEZONE 2 — PCZ #84 · 79%

Stunning graphics and a winning blend of strategy and first-person action in this sequel to the highly acclaimed *Battlezone*. The fight for world domination has never looked so good.

PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456700

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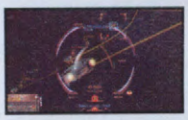
EVERQUEST: THE RUINS OF KUNARK



PCZ #92• 90%

The combat-oriented online RPG of choice just got a whole lot better with this expansion pack. Chris Anderson has spent months casting spells with hundreds of other people and never stops talking about it, so there must be something special going on. *Ruins Of Kunark* doesn't really offer any radical changes, but in this case bigger really is better.

PUBLISHER Ubi Soft • 020 8944 9000



ALLEGIANCE — PCZ #91 • 82%

The first true online only space combat sim, *Allegiance* is a complex yet rewarding beast. Now you can fly around with hundreds of others, co-ordinating strategies and establishing chains of command.

PUBLISHER Microsoft• 0345 002 000



ASHERON'S CALL — PCZ #88 • 76%

The graphics and freedom to do almost anything make this title a commendable addition to the genre. But, as in real life, it's a great tragedy you can't kill other humans as most of the ones you meet deserve a good kicking.

PUBLISHER Microsoft• 0345 002 000



ULTIMA ONLINE: RENAISSANCE — PCZ #92 • 75%

It's been at the top for a while, but now that the sequel is on the way the original looks dated. *Renaissance* isn't enough of an improvement for it to compete with *EverQuest* – online RPGs are moving on.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442



PLANETARION — PCZ #94 72%

Available free from the Net, *Planetarion* is the work of three out-of-work Norwegians. A turn-based sci-fi strategy game with minimal graphics, it still manages to absorb you with its playability.

PUBLISHER Planetarion • www.planetarion.com

MODS

COUNTER-STRIKE



PCZ #95 • 93%

They say the best things in life are free, but until *Counter-Strike* arrived in the *ZONE* office we never knew what they were talking about. Not only is *Counter-Strike* the most popular shooter online, it's also the most addictive substance known to man. Don't start playing it if you want to keep your life intact, and don't blame us when you start mouthing the words "Go! Go! Go!" in your sleep.

DOWNLOAD www.counter-strike.net



ROCKET ARENA 3 — PCZ #94 • 89%

Quake III hasn't convinced everyone, but if you want pure deathmatch there's nothing better, especially when you add the *RA3* mod. You start off with full ammo and armour, and fight in specially designed one-on-one arenas. Class.

DOWNLOAD www.planetquake.com/quake3



FIREARMS — PCZ #94 • 81%

Another copy of *Counter-Strike* for *Half-Life*? Well, yes, but *Firearms* looks set to be more epic in scope, with large maps, dozens of weapons to choose from, including grenade launchers, and the dreaded minefields.

DOWNLOAD www.firearmsmod.com



Q3 JAILBREAK — PCZ #92 • 81%

Quite often, the simple things in life are the most satisfying. Take JailBreak. It's Quake 3 with two jails and two sides, but the team-based play adds a balance that's not present in standard deathmatch modes.

DOWNLOAD www.teamreaction.com



TACTICAL OPS — PCZ #95 • 80%

It's taken a long time for *Unreal Tournament* coders to come up with a viable *Counter-Strike* equivalent. *Tactical Ops* still has a way to go, but it's looking very promising already with cleverly designed maps and a convincing atmosphere.

DOWNLOAD www.planetunreal.com/tacticalops

PCZONE ALL-TIME CLASSICS



DOOM

This is the game that needs no introduction. Without *Doom* we wouldn't have had *Quake, Unreal Tournament* or *Half-Life*. Every time you play a first-person shooter you should take five minutes to pay homage to the game that changed the world as we know it. *Doom*, we thank you.



ULTIMA VII

Still the best of all the *Ultima* games, and probably the finest RPG ever seen on a PC. The graphics might be old-hat, but the gameplay certainly isn't. *Ultima VII* blends exploration and character interaction, and it's the last title in the *Ultima* series to give complete party control.



ULTIMA UNDERWORLD

We reviewed this game back in the first issue of *PC ZONE*. It was a landmark RPG then and it's still a landmark RPG now, although the graphics obviously look a bit tired and dated. Do we think it's the best RPG ever? Almost, but not quite. Cast your eyes up the mag a couple of inches for the answer to that question.



DUNE II

If you know your strategy, you'll know that *Dune II* is the game that's done more than any of its rivals to define the genre as we know it today. The 2000 update was disappointing, but only because it didn't add anything new. The fact that it still plays better than many new titles is testament to its staying power.



SENSIBLE WORLD OF SOCCER

EA's *FIFA* series might look the part, but we're convinced that *Sensible Soccer* was and is the ultimate example of gameplay over presentation. With its famous top-down view, *Sensible* offers fast frantic action that does more to replicate the real-life game than any of its predecessors.



UFO: ENEMY UNKNOWN

This game came out of nowhere and took the world by storm. Compelling strategy, tense turn-based battles and a myriad of research options made this the most addictive game ever upon its arrival. Subsequent sequels were just as addictive, but this is the game that originally captured our hearts.



MAGIC CARPET

Drawing gasps of amazement from everyone who saw it, Bullfrog's *Magic Carpet* was one of the most original and inventive games to be released in the early days of 3D. So original, in fact, that it never got the recognition it deserved. We still think the blend of action and strategy was spot-on.



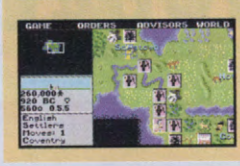
WING COMMANDER

The original space combat game spawned the first big-budget PC series. In fact, the *Wing Commander* series was so hugely successful that they went and made a film. Inevitably, this was absolute rubbish and the public stayed away in their millions. Will these people never learn?



TOMB RAIDER

She might be getting a bit rusty round the gills, but when Lara first bounced onto the small screen, we fell in love with her instantly. 3D action adventure games haven't been the same since and at the time nothing could touch it. Do you remember your first encounter with the T-Rex?



CIVILIZATION

The original and some say the best turn-based strategy game. When *Civilization* first appeared, it was hailed correctly as the first game that changed and evolved depending on how you played it. Recent versions have presented more of the same, but in this case that is definitely no bad thing.

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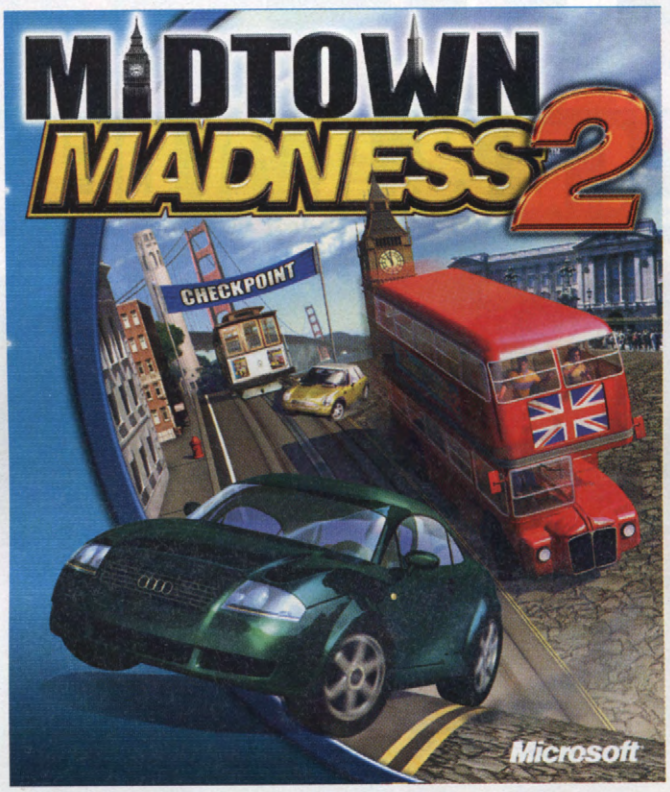
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ON THE CD

Whether you've got the CD or the DVD, you'll find loads of great demos to try out on this month's disc

MAKING WORDS Martin Korda **MAKING DISCS** Alan Stonebridge

HELP!

CD trouble? Don't worry – phone our helpline and sort yourself out pronto!

CD-ROM HELP Phone Interchange on 0152 5711 482 any weekday between 9.30am and 5pm, and Saturday from 10am to 2pm, **or email pc_zone@interchange.co.uk**. Please do NOT phone the *PC ZONE* office. Thanks.

BEFORE YOU DIAL... If you are calling the helpline, please take note of the following points

- If possible, have your PC operating and near the phone when you call.
- If this is not possible, note down all relevant information – ie system type, sound card, RAM and so on – plus the nature of the fault.
- Make sure you have a pen and paper to hand when you call so you can jot down the relevant info.

MINIMUM SPECIFICATION

- You need at least a Pentium 166 with 32Mb RAM to run the software on this month's CD-ROM.
- Many of the programs on our cover CD-ROM are designed to run under Windows 95/98 and, as a result, some of them may require a Pentium 233 with 64Mb RAM to run satisfactorily. Please note that some games also require a 3D accelerator card to run.
- Use the browser and menu system to see which demos are 3D-accelerator only.

CD & DVD DEMOS



Watch out for the big hairy spiders.

DEEP FIGHTER

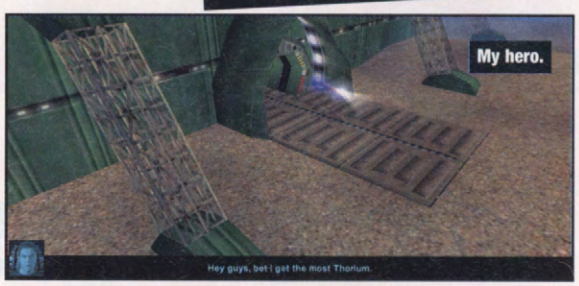
EXCLUSIVE

Ubi Soft

Our exclusive demo this month is Ubi Soft's underwater combat sim. If you're a fan of submarine games, you probably find that you're not exactly well catered for – but this could well change all that.

In *Deep Fighter*, you're a cadet who must help collect resources for the construction of a mother ship, which will enable your nation to relocate to another part of the ocean. The reason for this hurried departure is that your people are threatened by an imminent disaster. As if you didn't have enough to worry about, you've also got to beware of dangerous creatures and enemy submarines, intent on sending you for a swim with the fishes.

The demo allows you to sample several features of the game. Beginning with an FMV briefing, you'll be filled in on both the game's general storyline and your mission goals. After this, it's off to your sub, which you must pilot towards a radioactive material called Thorium. Once you've gathered enough of it, return to base and, to paraphrase one of the female sub-pilots, drop your load. Just remember to keep an eye out for dangerous spiders and opportunist enemies, or you'll be dead before your career in the navy even gets started.



My hero.


Keep on rocking in the sea world... sorry.

Controls Mouse and keyboard



STUPID INVADERS

Ubi Soft

The point-and-click genre has become somewhat extinct over the last few years, but finally we've got a game that could trigger a renaissance.

Stupid Invaders will appeal to those of you who are in possession of a slightly warped sense of humour. If you're not into toilet jokes, stupidity and slapstick, then we suggest you lighten up before going in.

In the demo you can wander round a few of the beautifully rendered locations and marvel at the brilliant cartoon-like graphics. There's only really one puzzle to solve, but it's just about enough to give you the general gist of what to expect when the final version is ready.

Controls Mouse and keyboard

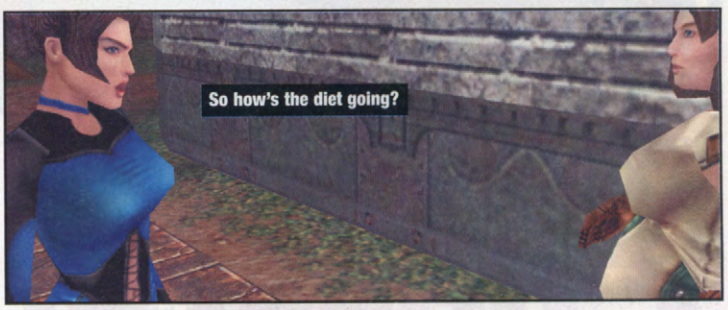
HEAVY METAL: F.A.K.K 2

Take 2

Based on the comic book of the same name and utilising the *Quake III* engine, *Heavy Metal: F.A.K.K 2* is a third-person action adventure, aimed at rivaling *Tomb Raider*. Featuring the curviest woman in computer game history, heroine Julie must fight off the evil hordes and protect her world from being overrun.

The demo places you at the start of the game, where you can wander round, picking up objects and learning how to control Julie. You also get the chance to interact with friendly characters, and battle against plenty of strange-looking creatures. The action is fast and relentless once it gets going, so don't let the quiet parts fool you, you'll soon have more than enough to be thinking about.

Controls Mouse and keyboard






Come out and surrender. We have you semi-surrounded.

PANZER GENERAL III: SCORCHED EARTH

SSI

If you like World War II and love turn-based games (like our very own Daniel Emery), *Panzer General III: Scorched Earth* is probably your ideal type of game. If you're not too sure whether or not you like moving blocky-looking tanks and troops round a map little by little, then this demo will either convince you or totally put you off.

Taking control of a division of allied troops, which range from infantry to heavy tanks, you must capture a town which has a name that sounds like a chronic bowel disorder – Uruypinsk – within four turns.

The time limit is extremely tight, so you'll need to milk as many move-and-attack rounds as possible from your troops and vehicles. It's also important to consider attack distances, and which weapons are most effective against which vehicle types. You'll either love it or hate it, but the only way to find out is by giving it a go.

Controls Mouse

AIRFIX DOGFIGHTER

EON Digital Entertainment



Model airplanes, but not as we knew them.

If your average flight-sim bores you more than a lecture on crop rotation cycles, but you like the idea of some simple dog fighting, then perhaps this is the game for you. Instead of flying around the open skies, *Airfix Dogfighter* is set in your average house, in which kit planes and toy tanks battle it out for supremacy.

Your task here is to pick up a series of objects and embark on a seek-and-destroy mission. Armed with machine guns and rockets, you need to take out the enemy tanks, which will be doing their utmost to blow you out of the sky. It's easy to pick up and fun to play and, with two multiplayer maps available as well, there should be more than enough to keep you occupied for quite some time.

Controls Keyboard

V-RALLY 2: EXPERT EDITION

Infogrames

Get ready for some fast-paced gravel-skidding action, with this excerpt from Infogrames' second *V-Rally* game. The race provided is incredibly fast, and you'll probably find that, after a few goes, you'll be using the brake sparingly and the accelerator liberally. However, don't expect an easy challenge, as you're bound to skid and roll your car many times before you fully master its handling on the slippery circuit. As annoying as his voice sounds, you should listen to the directions your co-driver gives you, especially if you're not familiar with the circuit. If you don't, you'll be all over the place.

Controls Keyboard



Oooops, part 2.



Oops, part 1.

Siamese-bike racing is tipped to be a popular sport of the future.

SUPERBIKE 2001

EA

Motorbike games are all too often a pile of old cack, but last year's *Superbike 2000* was the first that managed to really capture the feel and excitement of bike racing. Now we have the sequel, which EA have imaginatively named *Superbike 2001*. On the CD you'll find a single race round the high-speed circuit of Hockenheim. There are four difficulty levels to play against, and a whole load of riding aids to help you stay on the track and on your bike. With lush graphics and hugely accurate bike physics and rider movements, we're sure you'll agree that this is the best superbike game of all time.

Controls Keyboard or gamepad

GUNLOK

Virgin



Equip Gunlok with a wide variety of weaponry.



I never touched it, honest.

Games about robots with guns are always bound for success, which bodes well for *Gunlok*. Due for a November release (we'll believe it when we see it), it will give you the opportunity to take control of four robots and blow stuff up.

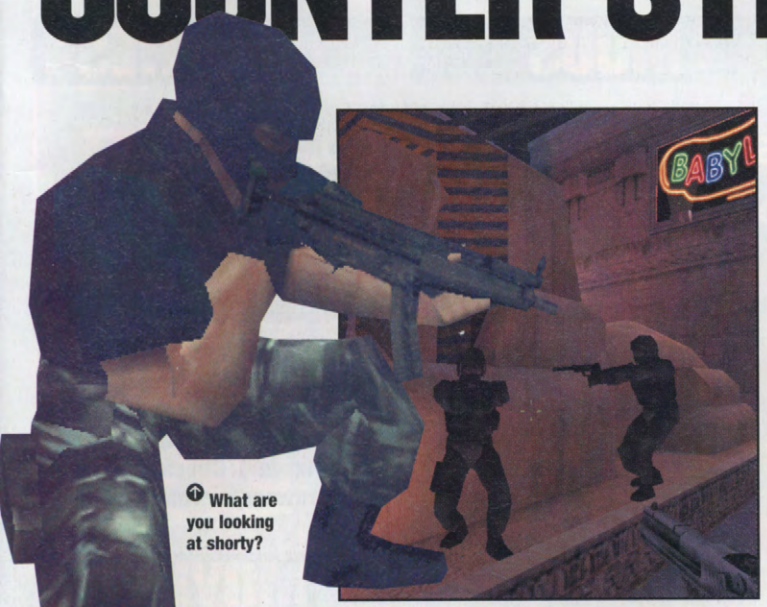
Of course, it's a bit more complicated than that, which you'll see for yourself when you load up this demo. It's only got one setting (easy), but even that will prove tough for beginners.

To help you get to grips with the control interface, you've got an easy to follow tutorial, which teaches you all about movement, combat and stealth.

Once completed you can have a go at the real thing, in a mission where you have to find and release stored power. Be careful when approaching enemies, as they all have a line of sight. Avoid their gazes and you'll find life much easier. Engaging the enemy head on can often end in disaster because, all too often, you'll lose some of your team. Just remember, lose more than one (or just Gunlok himself) and it's back to the start of the mission, so watch your back out there.

Controls Mouse and keyboard

COUNTER-STRIKE BETA 7.1



What are you looking at shorty?



You don't stand a chance mate.

The game which we can't stop playing just gets better and better, and this month we're giving you yet another updated version, Beta 7.1. For those of you who haven't yet experienced the delights of creeping round in teams and shooting your friends in the head, this is your opportunity to sample the most popular and best FPS mod of all time, without having to notch up a massive phone bill by having to download it off the web.

Controls Keyboard and mouse

ON THE CD PATCHES

The latest updates for some of your favourite games

Age Of Empires II v2.0a
C&C: Tiberian Sun v2.03
Codename Eagle Win2000 Fix
Combat Mission v1.05
Dark Reign 2 v1.1
Deus Ex Beta Direct3D Driver
Diablo II v1.03
DS9: The Fallen Demo patch
Grand Prix Legends Direct 3D
Ground Control v1008
Gunship! Patch
Heavy Metal: F.A.K.K 2 v1.02
Heavy Metal: F.A.K.K 2 v1.02 Demo patch
Icewind Dale v1.06
NASCAR 3 Truck Expansion Pack v1.2
PGA Championship Golf 2000 v3.1
Seven Kingdoms II v1.2
Shogun: Total War v1.11
Star Trek: Klingon Academy v1.0.1
Submarine Titans v1.1
Tachyon: The Fringe patch
Terminus v1.8
Vampire: TMR v1.1
Warlords Battlecry 1.01

ON THE CD ONLINE

With these helpful programs, using the Internet will be a whole lot easier.

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Find your next job online with Datum Online

ON THE CD EXTENDED PLAY

Turn to page 172, where Tony Lamb will fill you in on our great selection of Ground Control maps

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ON THE DVD

WORDS Martin Korda DISC Alan Stonebridge

Here's all the extra stuff that we've crammed onto your DVD

DVD ONLY DEMOS

NASCAR HEAT
All the propane-fuelled action you could want

EURO 2000
Can England win this one? Probably not

F1 WORLD GRAND PRIX
See if you can drive better than the real life pros

SANITY: AITKEN'S ARTEFACT
Use your psychic powers to win in this brand new action/adventure

REACH FOR THE STARS
Turn-based space colony and combat action

THANDOR
The world of mythical RTS action is calling you once more

CLASSIC GAME DEMOS

Half Life: Uplink
Still the best game of all time.

Unreal Tournament
The FPS which beat *Quake III* at its own... erm... game.

Grim Fandango
It's still the best adventure game ever made.

Falcon 4.0
Flight sims really don't get much better than this one.

Championship Manager 3
The third instalment of the best footy management sim ever.

Hidden and Dangerous
So real, you'll think you're there.

FPS LEVELS

Getting bored of your favourite FPS? Here are some new levels to put the spice back into your frag life.

QIII: ARENA
Quake III Arena levels

HALF-LIFE
Action Half-Life levels
Counter-Strike levels
Team Fortress Classic levels
Half-Life map information
Half-Life levels

UNREAL TOURNAMENT
Unreal Tournament Bonus Pack
Unreal Tournament Map Information
UT Assault
UT Capture The Flag levels
UT Deathmatch levels
UT Domination levels

EXTENDED PLAY

EXTENDED PLAY 1 A round-up of stuff for classic games

MODS

Get more life out of your FPSs, with this vast selection of mods

HALF LIFE MODS
Classic Capture The Flag
Cold Ice
Infinity
Lambada Arena
Science and Industry
Sven Co-op
War In Europe
Counter-Strike Beta 7

UNREAL TOURNAMENT MODS
Strike Force 1.4
UT Mutators
UT Player skins

QUAKE III ARENA MODS
Jailbreak Beta 2
Jailbreak Beta 2 Stage 2
Q3 Fortress Beta 1
Q3 Fortress Beta 1B
Q3 Fortress Beta 1C
Q3 Fortress Beta 1D
Q3 Fortress Online Guide
Q3F Installer
Rocket Arena 3

PATCHES

So many patches, we'd have needed half the mag to list them all. Check out the browser on the DVD for a full listing

DRIVERS

The newest drivers for the most popular 3D graphics cards around. Check the DVD browser for full details

MOVIES

Sit back and take a look at the hits of the future

ALICE (Requires Indeo condecs)
Could this steal the title of 'Game Of The Year' from *Deus Ex*? See for yourself with this extended trailer

THE MAKING OF ALONE IN THE DARK 4 (Requires Quick Time)
A cool four-minute look at the making of this chilling sequel

ALONE IN THE DARK 4 (Requires Quick Time)
A superb Quick Time trailer of this upcoming thriller of a game.

HALO (Requires Windows Media Player)
Amazing trailer for Bungle's epic

WOT NO DVD!

As you can see, the DVD is packed with all sorts of goodies. If you could only get hold of the CD edition of *PC ZONE*, don't panic, you can still get hold of a copy of the DVD for just £2.50. All you need to do is send a cheque made payable to Dennis Direct, along with your name, address and daytime telephone number, to the address on the right. Alternatively, ring 01789 490 215 and have your Switch, debit or credit card to hand.

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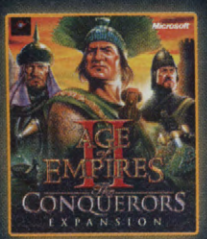
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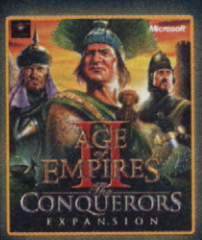
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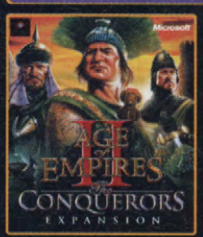
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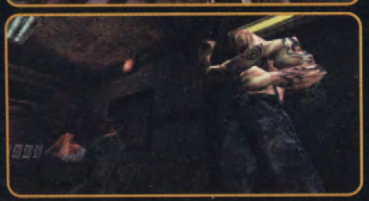
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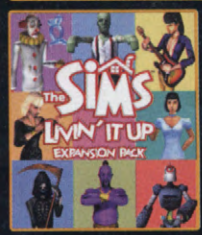
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EXTENDED PLAY

This month, top-class strategy game *Earth 2150* finds itself stretched out on the *PCZ* mortician's slab of fame and the CD has nine great maps for you to try out. We've even dissected them for you, too. Scalpel, please nurse...

DRILL SERGEANT Tony Lamb

TRY IT YOURSELF



On this month's cover CD we've got all the official patches, bug fixes, utilities and map editors we could find, including all the ones mentioned in these pages. To track them down, use the CD browser to go to the Patches section. All the patches are listed with a brief description and any relevant documentation. Make sure you read any associated README files for information on how to install individual patches. For further help, turn to our CD pages, starting on page 158.

"*Earth 2150* is simple to get to grips with, easily customised and has an in-built map editor that allows you to create your own environments"

EARTH 2150

One day, someone will create a new type of real-time strategy game. A game in which mankind has seen the light and changed his warring ways. Global destruction will have been averted, the sun will shine happily and the men of the world won't need to fight each other any more. Instead, we will live in luxury: be fed fine foods by bevies of voluptuous and eager maidens, and our only strategy problems will be where to get our next six-pack of perfectly chilled beer. A world of peace, quiet and very cheap petrol.

Fortunately for all of us, *Earth 2150* is not that game. Instead, Mattel Interactive has created a masterpiece of more traditional RTS style. Ever since 1945, when the Allies decided to end the second world war by instantly vapourising 100,000 or so civilians, the spectre of Earth-bound apocalypse has hung over all our heads, and knock me down with a feather if that isn't the scenario we have here.

The world of *Earth 2150* has three warring factions – the Eurasian Dynasty, the United Civilized States and the Lunar Corporation. The first two are essentially the remnants of the former USA and Russia, and the latter is a society created by the first people who left the Earth to set up an orbiting space-city (later moved to the moon) back in 2034. Unfortunately, they discover to their horror that the Earth has been knocked out of its orbit and is going to drift closer to the sun. Their only chance for survival is to relocate to Mars and that will take a lot of resources to achieve. In typically human fashion and completely ignoring the fact that it was a previous war that created the problem, the three factions set about slaughtering each other in an attempt to get their hands on the Earth's remaining raw materials. It is at this point that you step in.

Earth 2150 is pretty straightforward, easily customised and has an in-built map editor that allows you to quickly create your own environments. We've put a bunch of new maps on the CD and installing them is a doddle – just unzip them into your *Earth 2150* directory and then choose whichever one you want to play from the mission list.



Build your defences as quickly as you can and avoid the lava.



A ruined town in a rare, unforested area.

THE MARSH V1

Filename: *themarshv1.zip*
Size: 14Kb
Rating: ✪✪✪
Players: 8 max

A small map but one that will provide loads of action. The terrain layout is simple – it's a marsh – which means that there are virtually no obstacles to stop the enemy from finding your base very quickly and then attacking it. That said, the enemy will always attack from the same direction and this means that a suitably well fortified and defended base should prove an insurmountable barrier for them. Look for the enemy in the opposite corner across the map.



A watery expanse of canals, lakes and ponds surround you.

TIMBER V1

Filename: *timberv1.zip*
Size: 75Kb
Rating: ✪✪
Players: 5 max

As the name suggests, there is no shortage of trees on this map. *Timber V1* has quite a large layout and tree-hugging hippie types will be in their element here. Tactical placement is important as the player who doesn't control the killing zones (bottlenecks such as bridges and narrow passing places for example) will not last long. Grab hold of these as quickly as you can and make sure you keep them in order to prevail.

LAVA LAKE V1

Filename: *lavalakev1.zip*
Size: 16Kb
Rating: ✪✪✪
Players: 15 max

The design of *Lava Lake V1* is truly minimalist and based around a number of small islands standing proudly on a huge lake of molten lava.

However, don't be fooled into thinking there won't be much action. Due to the unconventional design, land and naval units are wasted here – they'd quickly perish in the volcano-fuelled heat – which means that building aircraft is the only option. Consequently, you've got to be on the ball or you'll take a pounding from the enemy very quickly. Hostile manufacturing plants can rapidly churn out aircraft and you'll need to get yours operating at maximum efficiency to try and keep up with your defensive needs.

Attacks when they come (and



Enemy bases spring up very quickly. Make sure to maximise your defences to counter the threat.

they do) will be airborne and fast moving. Make sure you have lots of anti-aircraft defences to counter the threat because you can guarantee that, while your own forces are off bombing your enemies, their aircraft will be trying to destroy you, too.

Overall a good map if you like quick and nasty action.

OUT IN THE COLD V1

Filename: *outinthecoldv1.zip*
Size: 97Kb
Rating: ✪✪✪✪
Players: 4 max
Out In The Cold V1 has loads of variety with realistic-looking terrain along with a host of features to keep you busy.

There are a lot of resources around, but the sheer size of the map creates logistical problems. Due to the distances involved, it can become very difficult to keep your forces going without them running out of supplies. Tanks running out of ammo in the middle of a firefight is not good.

Consider building heavily fortified supply bases and try to keep them hidden or they'll get wiped out one by one. Alternatively, make them into local garrisons that can be used to capture and hold resource stockpiles. And these can then join together for mass attacks.



↑ Snow and mountains – age-old problems for any army.

TWINK'S REVENGE V1

Filename: *twinksrevengev1.zip*
Size: 65Kb
Rating: ✪✪✪✪
Players: 4 max
This is an attractive bit of wilderness landscaping. You might want to go on holiday there, soak up the fresh air and do some walking in the countryside. There's even a lake for skinny-dipping if that takes your fancy.

The terrain is genuinely natural looking and this helps add a huge dollop of reality to the game as you try to guide your army to victory. The lake area in the centre of the map is rich in resources and you can guarantee that your enemy will try to take control of it as quickly as he can. The risk is that as you go one way round the lake, enemy forces will go along the other side and launch a heavy attack on your base. You might want to leave a couple of units as lookouts.

SNOW FORTRESS V1

Filename: *snowfortressv1.zip*
Size: 67Kb
Rating: ✪✪✪
Players: 6 max
Snow Fortress is a medium-sized map in a winter setting. Tactically, you begin with something of an advantage as your starting position gives you a near-panoramic view of the valley below. The enemy have to approach this way and suitable armour will give you the opportunity to take them out as they struggle to reach you.

It's then up to you. The enemy won't stop attacking, so you can decide whether to meet them head on in the valley or allow a drawn-out war of attrition to develop instead. Fortify the river crossings or just use them as aiming points.

TOTAL WAR V1

Filename: *totalwarv1.zip*
Size: 103Kb
Rating: ✪✪✪✪
Players: 4 max
A big map which will give you the chance to exercise your naval power as well as your land and air forces. So far, maps which use the naval element seem few and far between, so this one makes a welcome change from the standard fodder. It also means that there's a large area of water between you and the enemy, so you'll need to get your aircraft built quickly as well as making sure your anti-aircraft defences are up to scratch.

Use your air power to quickly locate the enemy base and then move in for the attack. Land-based units will be helpful but too slow compared to your aircraft. Fog is a major annoyance on this map.

TROPICAL REVENGE V1

Filename: *tropicalrevengev1.zip*
Size: 104Kb
Rating: ✪✪
Players: 6 max
Tropical Revenge V1 is ideally suited for team play – say two or three people on each side. It's quite good and has plenty of resources but doesn't have the realism of some of the other maps. Its size means that the action might not be fast and furious, but at least the teams shouldn't wipe each other out too quickly. Hopefully this will lead to longer battles and the development of the more advanced weapons.

TWISTED CANYON V1

Filename: *twistedcanyonv1.zip*
Size: 27Kb
Rating: ✪✪
Players: 4 max
A medium-sized desert map with a layout that suggests there are a lot of dangerous bottlenecks. Don't let yourself get caught in one. Grab control of the bottlenecks and you will be in a tactically superior position. The resources are liberally sprinkled around he centre of the map and you might want to grab them early on before building your fortified base. With the resources firmly under your control you'll be able to zero in on those bottleneck points and hopefully win the game. PCZ



There are lots of realistic-looking landscapes. The fog on this map spoils the view.

NET ADDRESSES

Many games come with some sort of map editor these days, be they FPSs or strategy games like *Earth 2150*. Designing your own map is a great way to learn how to play the game better by interacting properly with your environment and hence improving your chances of victory. It also happens to be damned good fun, which is what it's all about anyway.

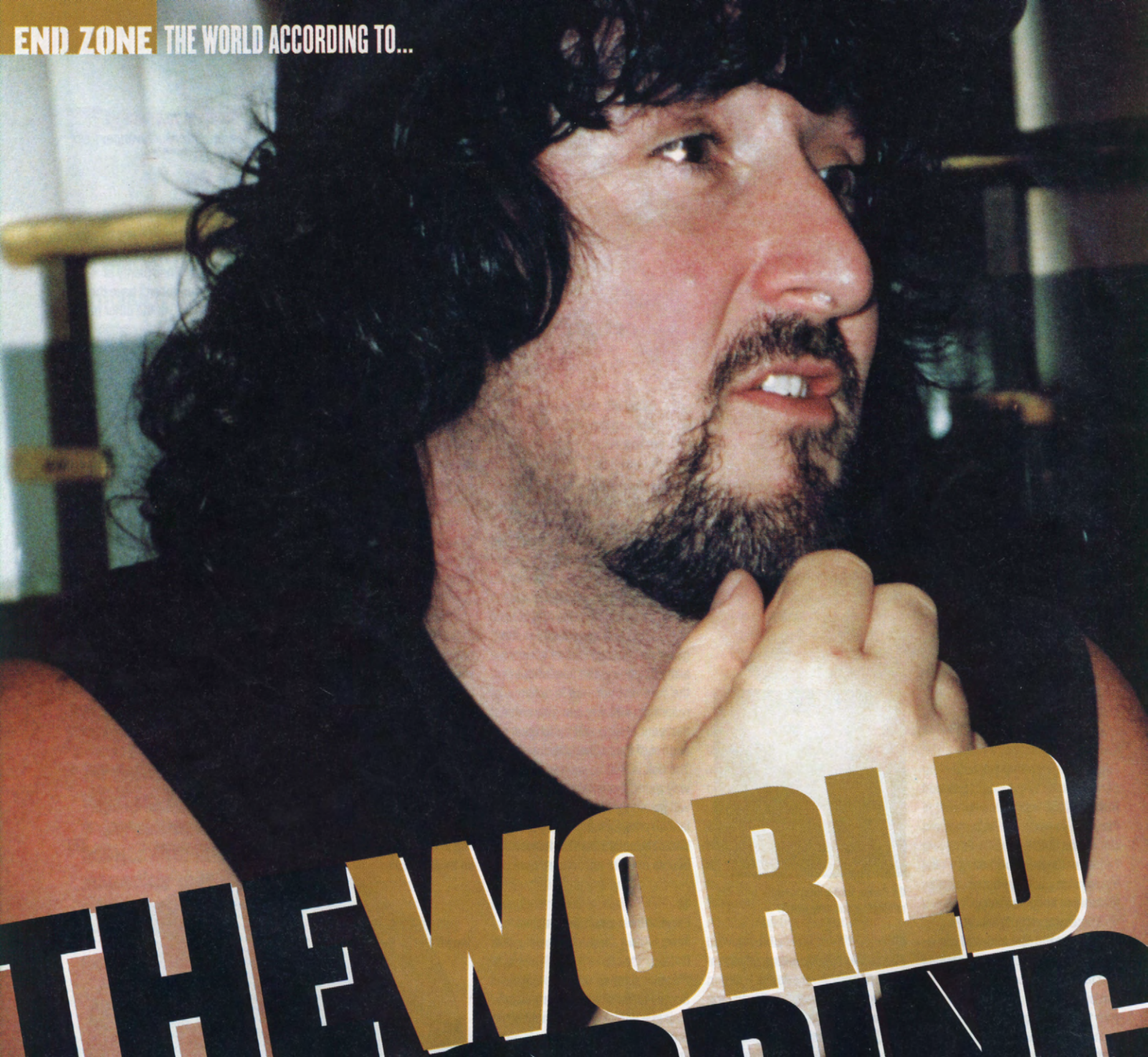
Try these websites for more maps and other *Earth 2150* add-ons:

www.pczone.co.uk
Your first point of reference should be the *ZONE* website. It features an extensive download section, so chances are you'll find everything you need right here.

www.earth2150.com
The official website for the game and full of information about the storyline and more. If you don't own it, there is an 81Mb demo you can download. Fans will find some wallpapers, digital video files and an MP3 of the *Earth 2150* theme.

www.earth2150.co.uk
This is a UK fan club, which is choc-full with news, maps and downloads.

http://www.geocities.com/earth2150info/
The *Earth 2150* Information Center. A reasonable source for downloads, maps and background info on the three warring armies in the game.



THE WORLD ACCORDING TO...

MUCKY FOOT



"We fly by the seat of our pants, adding things without knowing exactly where it's going"

GARY CARR, MUCKY FOOT

With their second game well underway, *Paul Presley* finally tracks down the first of the Bullfrog breakaways

There's only one species on Earth that can drink more than journalists and it's games programmers. Two nights before the scheduled ECTS meeting with Mucky Foot, your fearless correspondent, covering a lavish Eidos press event, was treated to the sight of a very 'happy' Gary Carr running around the snooker room of a five-star country hotel in East Sussex, wrestling a fellow scribe to the ground, then carrying a hapless PR girl over his shoulder to some unknown destination. Plenty of stories emerged from that night, most of them unprintable in a family magazine such as this, but, suffice to say, when we meet up in the plush foyer of the Olympia Hilton two days later, there's a look of understanding between us, as if to say "You know what happened, I know what happened, let's see that it goes no further... for both our sakes."

Which is fine by me. The blank spot in my mind surrounding that night could well be hiding a guilty secret or two of my own. Instead we focus on the task at hand. Carr and fellow Mucky Foot directors Mike Diskett and Fin McGechie sit down and order soft drinks and coffee. Wise move. We start with something I picked up on during the Eidos presentation...

During the *Startopia* demonstration, you were making distinctions between a Theme-brand simulation and an actual 'game'. What do you see the differences as being?

Carr: We didn't want to write something too similar to what we'd done before, and get labelled as a company that is just reproducing the stuff Bullfrog did. So we've been trying to use the experience of what we've worked on before, while taking our own stance on things. One of the things we'd noticed about the Sim/Theme range of games is they're more of an 'experience' without real game rules. So we're trying to put a unique slant on the genre.

Diskett: With a lot of these types of games, you play in a sandbox and that's all there is. When you play them again it's always the same thing.

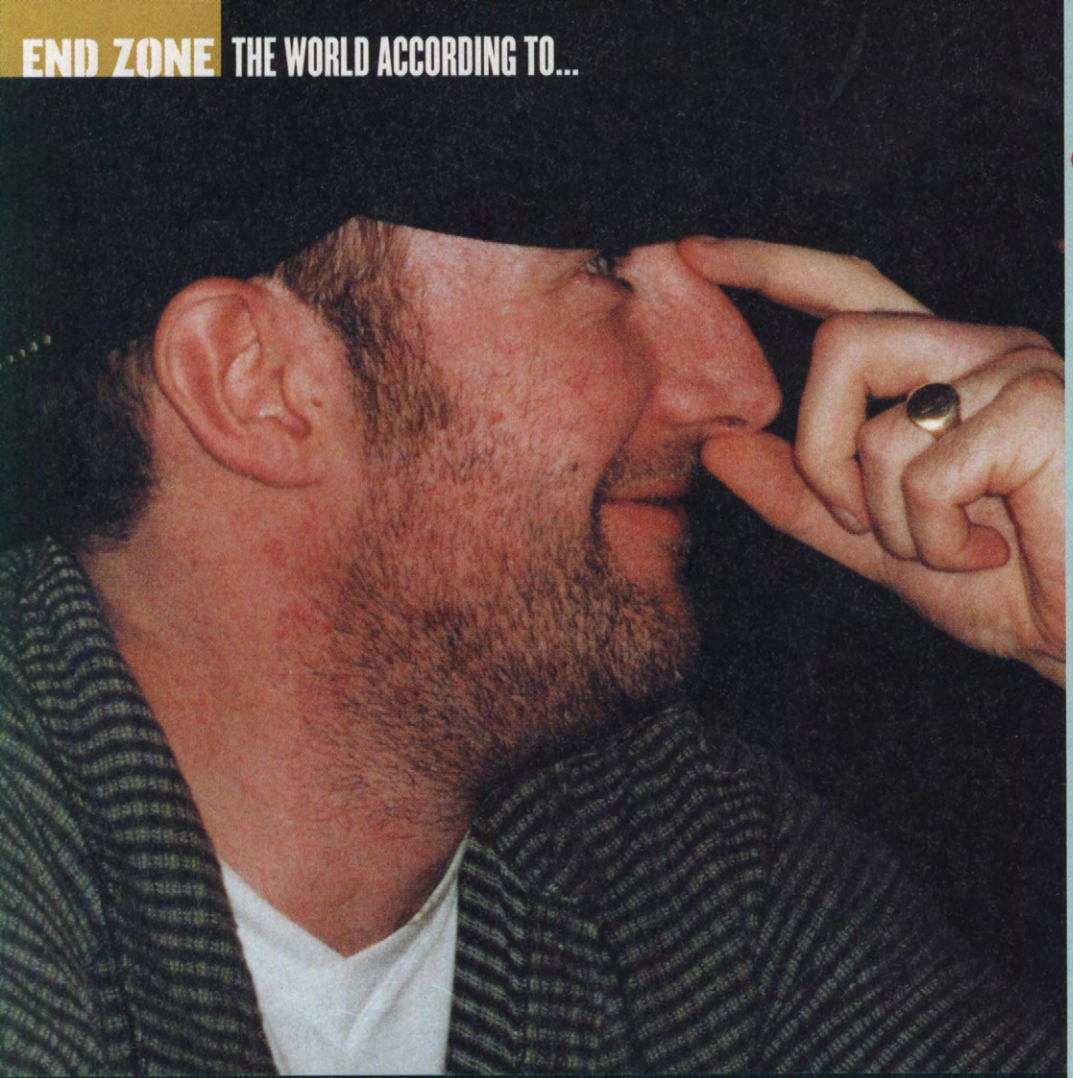
Carr: We found out from focus groups that most people only play up to a certain level in those games because they were getting everything out of the experience early on. There wasn't really a progression through the game. When you put two years of design into a game, you kind of want people to play it through to the end.

So how do you encourage them to play outside of the sandbox?

Carr: You put a storyline in there. And game rules such as 'if you don't do X then Y will happen, which is bad'. Hopefully then people will want to play it all the way through. You don't have to. If you want to keep tweaking the existing level then that's fine. But there's always more to come.

Both *Urban Chaos* and *Startopia* have what you might call an eclectic design structure. How open is your creative process?

McGechie: Everyone at Mucky Foot has worked together on a number of titles before and there's no real hierarchy of people responsible for anything.



Fin McGechie, artist and director, explains scale.



Mike Diskett, one of Mucky Foot's founders.

We all have mutual respect for each others' abilities. We spend about three months on the initial document, which is where we storyboard a lot of ideas. Most of that actually gets thrown away, but everybody's involved. If someone comes up with an idea we haven't thought of, it'll always get thrown into the pot. I think that's why the ideas do seem quite deep and varied. We don't just scribble down, 'It's going to be a first-person shooter with great graphics, now let's go'. We probably wouldn't enjoy ourselves if that was the way we worked.

Urban Chaos did show signs of being a more restrained, easily marketable game though.
Carr: Well, even that went layers and layers deeper than a lot of similar third-person shooters. Perhaps because it had a simpler game style though, a lot of people didn't really see that.

Doesn't such a freeform approach make it harder to write the game?
Diskett: It needs a lot more money.
Carr: Yeah, but the type of people you work with determines the type of game you end up writing, even though it does make things very complicated.
Diskett: Part of our game design philosophy is that the player has to live in these worlds for 20-40 hours or so. So they've got to be crammed full of interesting things to discover along the way. So they can say to other players, 'did you see such and such?'. Obscure things, like in _Urban Chaos_ where you could drive a car into a fire hydrant and have all the water squirt out. Probably half the people who played the game wouldn't have seen that. That same philosophy runs through all our games.
Carr: All this attention to detail can definitely work to your advantage. It's why people tend to play the games that we've really worked on, for longer periods of time. There may have been others in the same genre that were better 'games', but people appreciate that for their 20 or 30 quid they're going to get a lot of detail, new things they haven't seen, and they can be playing it a year later and realise there's something else to do – a completely new piece of gameplay that they hadn't discovered.

Is that something that stems from Bullfrog, or is it a more general British design mentality?
Diskett: I don't know if it's typically British or not. Definitely our Bullfrog heritage has encouraged that interest in creating interesting worlds.
McGechie: A lot of companies will come up with a document at the start and stick to it, whereas we're more organic. We tend to make it up on the fly. It's very difficult to say that you'll spend a couple of months on the idea and then use that as your bible for the next two years. As the game progresses you're going to evolve more ideas and they'll probably be a lot better than that little design plan at the beginning. We don't want to be that rigid. We quite like being able to come up with better and better ideas and change as we go.

Is there not something to be said for that more regimented, engine-creating approach that a lot of American designers opt for?
Carr: Oh yeah. They'll probably become very, very rich a lot quicker than we will.
Diskett: That's the businessman's approach. You know exactly what your deadlines are. There are probably five other games that you compare it to directly. You know exactly what's going to be fun. We fly by the seat of our pants, adding things without knowing exactly where it's going.

It sounds a lot riskier...
Carr: Yeah, but you've got more chance of coming up with something special. If we bought an engine in and tried to fit a game into whatever the restrictions of that engine are, you're going to get something very similar to everything else. Plus, who should you credit with that? Mucky Foot for the content or id Software for the engine? Although we may change our minds if we can come up with more than one game idea per engine, at the moment we just say, "Right, this game needs to look like this, it needs to do this, this is the environment, it needs to have this facility and that function, etc." We write the engine to do it, bin it at the end of the project and start again with the next game.

What do you make of the way EA has treated Bullfrog recently?
Carr: Well, treading carefully here of course, they bought a brand name and it's been very successful for them. They bought into something and it made them money. But you can't take that environment and put it into this larger organisation and expect it to work in the same way. There do seem to be less 'Bullfrog' games coming out now. I think it's because a lot of publishers, and this isn't just an EA thing, don't want a large number of new concepts. They want to build franchises, to just focus on one or two of the strongest titles and build on them. The Bullfrog of old would have been looking to work on up to five titles at a time.

Should we be building the reputations of individual development teams? Making them into Bitmap Brothers-style pop stars like the old days?
Diskett: I'm not sure that people really care. People always try to compare games to the music industry, but it's not like there's any kind of 'live' experience that you can go back to. You can't really show programmers sitting there typing away.

You don't fancy being the first programmers to play Wembley?
Diskett: (*Laughs*) Come and see us type!
Carr: The Bitmap's day was back when you could start and finish work on a game within about eight months. Most games these days take two years and around 30 people. There's not much room for 'personalities' like that. We're trying to keep things small, which means we have to work harder than most to produce two games within three years. But we're keeping it down to 12-15 people per team.

What expansion plans do you have?
Carr: We don't want to expand too much because I don't think we'd be able to manage that many people too well. We're not the kind of directors who can bollock people for getting in after half nine and having messy desks. More often than not we've got pizza boxes from three in the morning all over our own. We're not managers.
Diskett: I can't see us going bigger than two teams. We want to stay within this small kind of family environment that we've created. The teams will only get as big as they have to in order to still be able to produce world-class games. There are two tiers of games out there at the moment – the world class games that get all the press and sales and the also-rans that are basically the other 200 games released that fade into obscurity. So we want to get big enough to still be world-class but small enough to be happy with the way we work.

How many game ideas do you have on the go at any one time?
Diskett: We've probably got about 20 'specced up' at the moment.

> **"When you put two years of design into a game, you kind of want people to play it through to the end"**
> **GARY CARR**

Carr: We have a design folder on our server that fills up and empties out from time to time. Out of those, we have about five that the company intends to actually do at some point.
Diskett: Ultimately though it's up to the publisher to decide what gets funding. The best design will have to satisfy them and us. The ideal would be to be in Peter Molyneux's situation. He can fund his games himself and do whatever he wants and, at the end of the day, hand them over to the publisher to sell. So long as the publisher isn't risking two million pounds on a game, they're happy.

Is Molyneux still the role model in the god-sim design field?
Carr: He's not our role model as we started alongside him. In fact, we were producing games before he was. So he's not so much a role model as a friend and competitor. I like to think that we create software that can rival anything his team does. The only thing we can aspire to is his wealth. (*Laughs*)

I've been asking all of the ex-Bullfrog teams this. You, Lost Toys, Lionhead and Elixir in a field...
McGechie: Who'd win the fight?
All: Us. (*Laughs*)
Carr: Easily.
McGechie: You can put money on that. We challenge the lot of them. I bet they'd all chicken out.
Diskett: We could take all of them together.

And in case you're in any doubt, they have the scariest website photos of the lot (www.muckyfoot.com). It's true to say that *Startopia* is much more in keeping with the old Bullfrog ethos than *Urban Chaos* was, which may go some way towards explaining why it wasn't as well received as it could have been. Being packed with ideas is one thing, but the public has come to expect certain things from certain people. Whether Startopia will do enough to assuage the doubts we formed after *Urban Chaos* is yet to be made clear. It certainly looks good enough. Of course, these aren't criticisms I'd ever tell Carr and company in person. They'd probably beat the crap out of me. They really are big people. PZ


Gary Carr, party animal.

TEAMTALK



Ever wondered how a group of tough, cynical games professionals could spend their days doubling up as the international catwalk's hottest property?

BEHIND THE SCENES Mark Hill

The picture chosen to represent the career of the journalist in *The Sims* add-on *Livin' It Up* is a grim and respectable, balding man wearing a smart grey suit. If the game were trying to attain any degree of realism, it would have used a slobby, unshaven 20-something with a rapidly expanding beer-gut, wearing an SAS uniform or a space-goblin suit two sizes too big for him.

You may think this job is about playing games all day and briefly jotting down a few words about them. In reality, though, we spend most of our days living the gruelling life of sulky supermodels, subject to the whims and demands of moody, dictatorial photographers and sweating under bright lights for reel after reel of pictures. Welcome to the frightening world of the Supertest photo shoots. There's only one rule: we won't pose nude, which, should be a relief for you all.

PANDORA'S BOX

Since Supertests are informal conversations that usually take place in pubs and bars, it's only natural that we should be photographed there, like animals in their natural environment. We once consented to wear football tops for a management sim test, but that was as far as our wardrobe adventures went. Beer, pizza, games. It made sense. It was easy. It was also excruciatingly boring to look at. So, in the tradition followed time immemorial by Mediterranean priests, we made the move from the bar to the church for a chat about god games. But it was the next outing, for military action games, that really brought home the terrible hardships facing field journalists and war correspondents. Lying on some dog shit atop Primrose Hill, wearing the closest we could find in our wardrobes to green army gear, the cosy world of five-star hotels, indulgent PRs and Margaritas drunk with loaded developers seemed a long way away.

"We spend most of our days living the gruelling life of sulky supermodels, subject to the demands of dictatorial photographers"

There we were, kitted out with decommissioned rifles and pistols and trying our hardest to look like embittered soldiers caught in a brutal and unjust war, waiting for enemy troops and almost certain death. Out of the corner of my eye, half covered by a wisp of grass, a lardy woman in a red dress walked her two poodles, while across the lane a couple on their lunch break enjoyed a quiet picnic munching salmon sandwiches and *reading Captain Corelli's Mandolin*. We think it was the mother whose two children were being targeted by Keith Pullin's sniper-scope as they played on the swings who eventually called the police. The van pulled over behind us, and the photographer rose slowly behind his tripod wearing a nervous smile. Luckily, the officers were most understanding when we told them they were just toy guns and that we worked for a games magazine. But the smell of dog shit followed us around for days.

Since then, we've had the chance to sit and look odious in Porsches and Lamborghinis, stand in cold dark alleys pulling faces, pose like mannequin footballers and walk around the London Dungeon as if we owned the place. It helps when a bit of technological wizardry transforms a dull, strenuous and embarrassing shoot into something that actually looks great. Such was the case in the Space Combat, 3D RTS and Scary Game Supertests. For the latter, Paul 'Savini' Mallinson slaved away for hours on his home PC getting the nasty zombie look effects right – and if you look closely you'll see how much detail he managed to get in there.

EVERYONE SAY 'CHEESE'

But if anyone at *ZONE* is in danger of thinking of himself as a serious writer, he need only glance at last month's Supertest, the RPG one. Grown men wearing false beards and leotards, waving magic wands and plastic swords were just some of the humiliations we submitted to. Korda played hard to get and refused to show off his pectorals in his barbarian costume, but Dan Emery was worryingly keen to wear a large-breasted Valkyrie suit. Already a veteran of the cross-dressing scene after playing a World War II Wren in the RTS Supertest, Dan has a notorious lack of shame and even left the studio to have a cigarette in the street. No one picked him up, but we understand there was no shortage of offers. Chris had no need for a costume, since he's a registered druid anyway. As for myself, I suffered horribly in those tight leather knee-length boots, but was happy to fulfil my lifelong ambition of looking like a moron with a feather on my head and a mandolin in my hand. I'm told I was very good at it. The worst thing about the whole thing, though, is that we really enjoyed doing it.

If that isn't enough to make you lose what little respect you have left for us, just wait for the day we do a Lula Supertest. Remember, rules are made to be broken.



Call us retards or poseurs, if you like, but most of us are just respectable cross-dressers.

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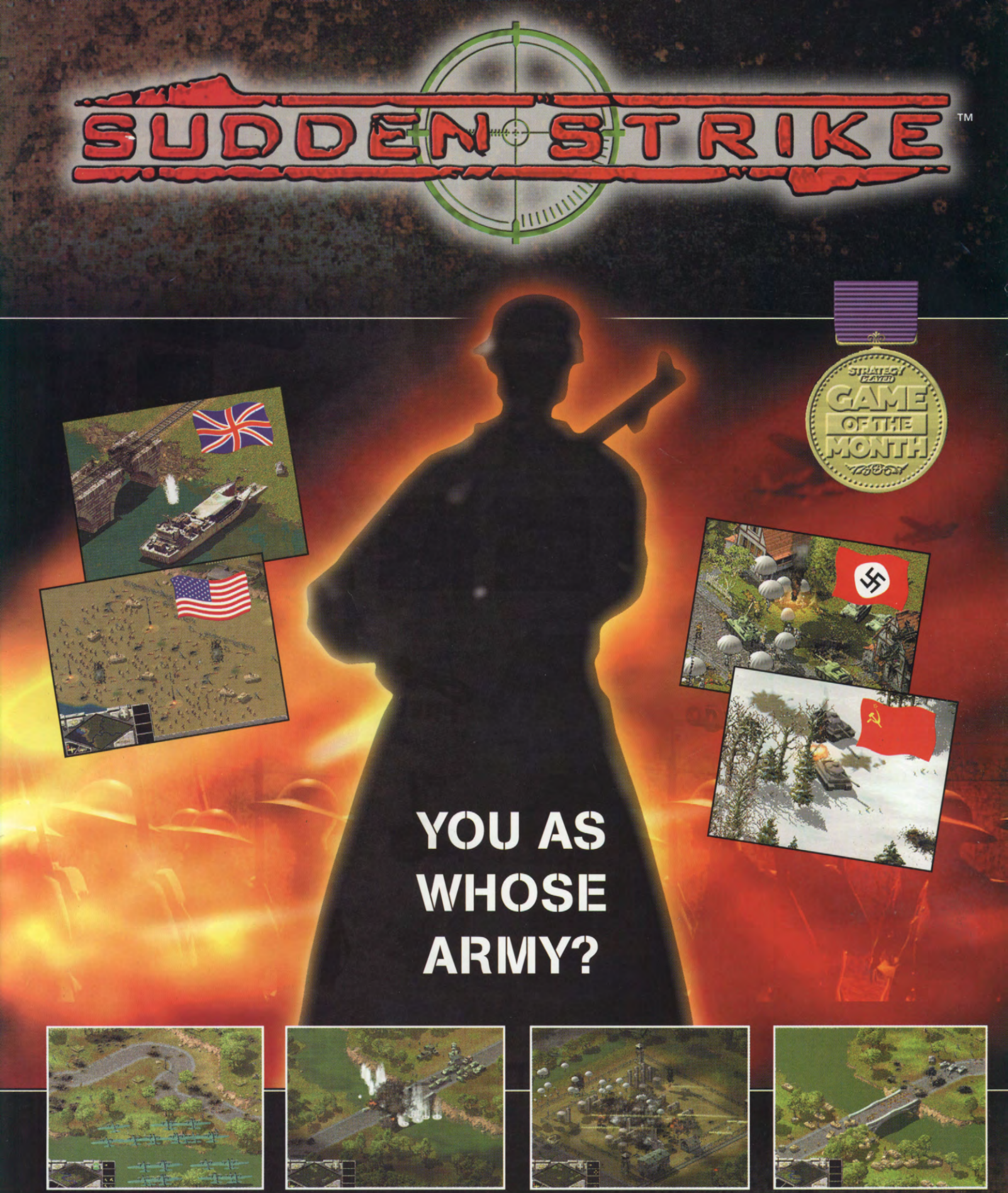
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